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## The Times Literary Supplement

August 22 1986 Priory House, St John's Lane, London EC1M 4BN

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"A Dinner Table at Night" (also called "The Glass of Claret"), 1884, John Singer Sargent's portrait in oil of Mrs Albert Vickers at Lavington Rectory; reproduced from *Sargent at Broadway: The Impressionist Years*, essays by Stanley Olson, Warren Adelson and Richard Ormond (118pp; with seventy-five black-and-white and forty-seven colour illustrations. John Murray, £15. 0 7195 4319 3). Stanley Olson's book *John Singer Sargent: His portrait* is reviewed on page 916 of this issue of the TLS.

## Prejudicial encounters

Ernest Gellner

BERNARD LEWIS  
*Semites and Anti-Semites*  
283pp. Weidenfeld and Nicolson. £15.  
0 297 89030 7

"For . . . many Jews . . . [genocide] . . . is the central experience of their personal lives, and their thoughts and actions are dominated by the knowledge that what has happened once can happen again. . . ." It is also possible not to be nervous about the future and yet to have difficulty in coming to terms with the past. Bernard Lewis's *Semites and Anti-Semites* has two themes: one very general, the other more specific. The above quotation would be a fitting epigraph for the broader theme, developed in a survey of two millennia of social, political and intellectual history, of a relationship and a hatred so intense that it could lead to a mass murder unparalleled in its cold organizational efficiency. The Nazi who made a speech during the war in which he claimed that this performance was an example of Kantian morality had a point: the Holocaust was carried out for the sake of a principle; it was strictly rule-bound, and it was disinterested. (As Professor Lewis points out, it hampered rather than aided the German war effort.)

Many men may live with the knowledge that, but for the grace of God, they would be on the gallows. They know, however, that to suffer such a fate they would also have had to make some contribution to it with their own conduct. As a Jew, one knows that but for the accident of time and place, one would have undergone execution irrespective of anything one had done or failed to do. Lewis's major theme is the history which led to this; and to the task of describing it he brings his unrivalled erudition and his usual lucidity and elegance of style, raised here perhaps to an even higher pitch by an underlying, though well-controlled, passion.

The overall pattern of the relations of Jews with their neighbours is of course well known. Bernard Lewis takes us through the transition from Christian to secular antisemitism in Europe, and the more recent shift of the centre of gravity of anti-Jewish feeling from the Right to the Left. As a very distinguished Arabist, Lewis can justly claim to be qualified to detect the apparent pro-Arab who in fact is merely anti-Jewish: "he often shows no interest in the history or the achievement of Arabs, no knowledge of their language or culture". In a similar tone, he comments on

the Anglo-American liberal, who claims a monopoly of sin for his country, as fiercely and as absurdly as his parents claimed a monopoly of virtue; the tortured WASP radical, who sees the Arab-Israeli conflict as ultimately one between Harlem and Scarsdale, and makes a choice determined by his own personal blend of prejudice and guilt.

Lewis's synoptic overview of his general topic is stunning in its clarity, but it provokes no argument. He presents no general theory, diagnosis or recommendation. But for its elegance and passion, one might compare this with some civil service brief: the facts are meticulously assembled, but no general conclusion is offered or prejudged. The author does not even indulge in any kind of systematic demolition job on overall theories—for example, depth-psychological or Marxist theories—offered by others. He may comment on their excesses regarding points of detail, but does not confront their general positions. It is a pity he shows such restraint.

The author's more specific theme owes more to his unique position as a Middle East scholar than to his personal experience as a citizen of the Atlantic world. This part of the book might well have been called "the new anti-Semitism of the Semites", and here Lewis does say something which is contentious and extremely interesting. For he makes the point that anti-Semitism among what is by far the largest group of speakers of a Semitic language, the Arabs, is a new and appalling phenomenon.

Lewis does not deny, of course, that Jewish communities in Muslim and Arab lands constituted minorities with inferior political status, hedged in by various restrictions and humiliations, and endowed with a pejorative stereotype by their neighbours. But he does appear to think that this kind of régime and attitude were qualitatively different from what

one might call Western antisemitism proper. Lewis refers to "the absence hitherto of that kind of visceral, personal hostility that marks the European anti-Semite, and can cause an almost physical discomfort in personal encounters with Jews". There is nothing "almost" physical about this discomfort: the central character in Sartre's study of an antisemite affirms precisely this—*c'est physique*. The physical, visceral nature of the reaction gives it a certain authority and legitimacy, in line with the theory that man's genuine identity and vitality spring from below, rather than from the abstract and cerebral elements in him.

This kind of antisemitism, says Lewis, is new in Arab lands, and arrived there only in the nineteenth century. The "previous level of prejudice . . . was not good, but was compatible with human relations and even with the beginnings of a political dialogue". Apart from its intense and deeply personal character, Lewis also stresses another difference between European and earlier forms of Muslim anti-Jewish feeling: for the Muslims, the Jews weren't really terribly important. In fact, their main trait was their puny insignificance and weakness. "The outstanding characteristic . . . of the Jews . . . in the classical Islamic world is their unimportance"; "most Muslim theologians and polemicists devoted very little attention to Judaism, which they saw as of minor importance". Ibn Khaldun, for instance, speaks, rather like Nietzsche, with admiration of the men in the Old Testament; but he speaks with contempt about the Jews of his own time, who had lost their tribal cohesion and hence their political clout. By contrast, it is characteristic of the Christian or European antisemite that he has Jews on the brain. They are simultaneously credited with lack of manly strength and with demonic and genuinely menacing power.

This is perhaps the most interesting and important thesis to be found in Lewis's book: there is a fundamental difference between European and Muslim antisemitism. The former is deep, obsessional and central to the system of ideas of a civilization; the latter is—or at any rate was—relatively superficial, and held only a minor, peripheral place in the preoccupations of a civilization. "The situation of the non-Muslim minorities in classical Islamic states falls a long way short of the standard set and usually observed in the present-day democracies. It compares, however, favourably with conditions prevailing in Western Europe in the Middle Ages, and in Eastern Europe for very much longer." As a result of infection by the European virus, carried initially by Christian Levantine communities, but, of course, encouraged and disseminated by the Arab-Israeli conflict, the erstwhile comparatively benign Muslim antisemitism has come to resemble the European version. It may not be too late to reverse this trend, but time is running out. "If there is no solution or alleviation, if the conflict drags on, then there is no escape from the unending downward spiral of mutual hate that will embitter the lives of Arabs and Jews alike. An awesome choice now confronts Israelis, Arabs, indeed all of us." This is the final passage of the book, and no doubt its central message.

Professor Lewis has lent his enormous scholarly authority to one important item frequently found in the general presentation of the Arab case in the Middle East conflict: Jewish communities did not suffer in the Land of Islam, and hence they felt no need to migrate. I have strong doubts about this position. Before I argue that it is essential that I avoid possible misunderstandings, I do not wish to argue a contrary case in the spirit of listing items on some Muslim or Arab moral charge sheet. A traditional society cannot be blamed for possessing a segregated minority and stigmatizing it. Second, Lewis's knowledge of the Muslim and Arab worlds is so much greater than mine that I query any factual assertion of his only with great trepidation. But the point is: too important to be evaded, and it may all be a matter of perspective.

Muslim anti-Jewish feeling does seem to me to possess precisely that visceral quality which Lewis says it lacks. I have heard liberal Muslim North African intellectuals, who do not themselves manifest this quality, comment precisely on it. Lewis tells an interesting story about Israeli scholars who arrived in Cairo and wished to interview the editor of an anti-Israeli

journal. He refused to see them in his office, but courteously offered to talk to them in his home. Lewis notes that this is the reverse of the American "five o'clock shadow"—the willingness—and suggests that it is typical of the home—and suggests that it is typical of the traditional Muslim situation. Yet although traditional North African tribesmen, for instance, did not have offices in which to receive anyone, their relationship to Jews was analogous to the American: there were ample functional relations, but no ordinary, symmetrical human ones.

Why, then, does Lewis argue the contrary? Part of the explanation may lie in our different experiences; in the difference between the backwoods and lower strata of society on the



Alfred Eisenstaedt's photograph of an old rabbi in Jerusalem is reproduced from Eisenstaedt: Witness to our time (348pp. Secker and Warburg. £12.95. 0 436 14191 4).

one hand, and more sophisticated urban milieux on the other. In Islam, as in Europe, people in stable social structures with routinized human relations are liable to indulge (perhaps are obliged to indulge) the overt expression of stereotypes, however pejorative: by contrast, urban sophisticates whose lives involve a wide range of encounters normally refrain from doing so. There is also the difference between areas such as North Africa where, as Lewis himself notes, the Jews were traditionally the only minority, and highly plural Levantine cities, which were in effect composed of minorities. In one passage, Lewis refers to the "exposed and vulnerable position" of North African Jews, and also refers to the "degradation so vividly depicted by European travellers" in Ottoman lands and still more in Iran by the late eighteenth century. Is there much consolation in this, in any case questionable hypothesis, that it may have been better in preceding periods? There is also the nature of the evidence that Lewis primarily considers: historical scholarship for the past, political documentation for the present. He does not draw conspicuously on on-the-ground studies of inter-communal relations; although such studies do exist. The work of (say) Valensi and Udovitch, Rosen, Flammang, Briggs, Sebagg, Goldberg, on the life of Jewish communities in Muslim lands, is not invoked, though some of these scholars are Lewis's colleagues at Princeton. Could it be relevant that Lewis's experience of the West is primarily that of an ordinary citizen, who has to take the rough with the smooth, whereas in the Middle East he is above all a greatly admired scholar, liable to be right royally received?

There are no doubt profound differences between European civilization and Islamic. Jews are central in the foundation story of Christianity, whereas they play an unfavourable, but relatively tangential, role in the Muslim account of the origins of Islam. Europe faces the problems inherent in having endogenously produced the modern world; Islam faces the problems of having to cope with its

extraneous imposition. No major (or for that matter minor) European nation has part of what it holds to be its national territory occupied by a Jewish state. Generally speaking, Arabs and Muslims are much less liable to populism, to be convinced by a theory which endorses and idealizes folk visceral reactions as profound and authoritative. This is because Arab nationalism defines itself, and the limits of the nation, in terms of the old literate High Culture, and in opposition to its folk variants, whereas in Central and Eastern Europe it had been the other way round. Educated Arab nationalists are consequently much less tempted to emulate the gut reactions of *Volk* or *narod*. These are the real differences; but the one proposed by Lewis does not convince me.

A historian of ideas looking at, say, European thought in the seventeenth century, might conclude that Europeans also considered Jews to be of minor importance. They did, admittedly, have them on the brain both in their theological beginnings and in their secular end. In the big issues which came up after the Enlightenment—brotherhood of all men against cosy cultural *Gemeinschaft*, reason and calculation against *Blut und Boden*, tradition against abstraction, equality against hierarchy, collectivism against individualism—in all these, Jews came to be extremely prominent, as symbols and as contributors, sometimes on both sides of the fence. But Jews are central to European sensibility during the establishment and the dismantling of monotheism. The birth and the death of God are dangerous times.

What follows from all this? Lewis talks as if it were a matter of, somehow, reducing the intensity of, if not actually solving, the present Arab-Israeli conflict, thereby diminishing Arab susceptibility to the European infection, and thereafter returning to, or resuming the dialogue on the basis of, what had no doubt been an imperfect, but none the less tolerable, condition. This seems to me a forlorn hope, for what may have been tolerable—if only in the sense that it was tolerated—is not so under modern conditions. The transformation of a system of unequal, stratified, inward-turned communities into a modern society, was bound to produce an intense reaction, which Lewis claims was caused by European contagion. Whatever the sins of the West, this does not seem to me to be one of them. Khominci's antisemitism, for instance, has precisely the quality which Lewis finds intolerable. Yet its roots are clearly local. To blame it on a Western model would be as bizarre as any of the fruits of Western self-hate decried by Lewis. (He would not deny this. Over and again, he cites the very evidence which one would use against his position—but without fully recognizing its force.)

The fate of the Jewish minorities within Islam was probably inescapable. The frictions consequent on an escape from a previously inferior situation were probably too great to be overcome. By contrast, the tragedy of the Palestinians was contingent; it arose from factors quite unconnected with the previous local situation. The fact that the two tragedies are otherwise comparable, both in kind and in the numbers involved, is possibly the one thing which, on the most favourable assumptions, could lead to an emotional appeasement.

In the more general aspect of Lewis's book, he contents himself with describing and summarizing, but refrains from theorizing about, the major dilemmas facing either Muslims or Jews. There is something horrifying about the thought of an Israel, even if strong enough to survive, locked in a permanent and absorbing hatred with its neighbours. An option which does not seem to me available, however, is the one proposed in the course of Lewis's handling of the more specific issue: cooling the intensity and then returning to a semi-idyllic, or at least tolerable, emotional *status quo ante*. I do not believe that condition was as tolerable—even on Lewis's own evidence—as he seems to suggest: more important perhaps, there is no turning back. Instead, one has to try and understand what potential there is within the world which is now crystallizing, as a result of the interplay of its own past and modern circumstance, and consider whether a solution may be possible. This exercise cannot conceivably be easy and success may well be impossible. No one would try to carry it out if it weren't for the fact that it cannot be avoided.



# The choppers and the chopped

John Turner

MAGNUS LINKLATER and DAVID LEIGH  
Not With Honour: The inside story of the  
Westland scandal  
218pp. Sphere. Paperback, £3.95.  
0 7221 5546 8

The Defence Implications of the Future of  
Westland plc: Third Report from the Defence  
Committee, Session 1985-86, HC 518  
69pp. HMSO. £6.  
0 10 251886 6

Westland plc: The Government's Decision-  
making: Fourth Report from the Defence  
Committee, Session 1985-86, HC 519  
73pp. HMSO. £5.60.  
0 10 251986 2

"Who will rid me of this turbulent priest?" So many political dramas have begun with these words and ended in tears that prudent statespersons might have learned to avoid them; but this government is not, apparently, very conscious of history. What it does know very well is that Westland will not be Britain's Watergate: not because standards in British public life are particularly high but because the British "constitution" is so heavily weighted in favour of dishonest government that nothing fatally damaging will ever get out.

*L'affaire Westland* could have happened, in outline, at any time in the last eighty years. British governments have traditionally relied on private industry to supply armaments. This used to save money when the world was suffering from outbreaks of peace, but governments in this century have underridden the defence industries whatever the international climate. The industries' main customer has thus almost always been the State. In this apparently unequal relationship, defence suppliers have found ways to even things up. One expedient is to offer jobs to retiring admirals, generals and civil servants; another is to threaten to go bankrupt. The first trick worked well even before 1914; the second supported the aircraft industry between the wars, when a ring was set up with government help to share out the RAF's orders. Since 1945 the industry's interdependence with government has strengthened, especially in negotiating joint ventures with other European manufacturers. The "invisible hand" of market forces was chopped off long ago. The Thatcher government says it was elected to stop this sort of thing: in practice it has behaved like its predecessors.

Westland was a creature of the First World War, a beneficiary of the inter-war ring, and a participant in post-1945 growth. Until its recent re-organization, it was top-heavy with retired admirals, generals and civil servants. It was good enough at making military helicopters, but its commercial skills in the civilian market were negligible. Its present difficulties began with its civilian helicopter project, the W30-100, which had proved itself as a commercial disaster by February 1983, when the Department of Trade and Industry obligingly lent the company £40 million to build a bigger one, the W30-200. The government tried to help in selling this machine, and even in giving some W30-100s away to the Indian government, which did not want them because they would not fly properly in hot places. By 1984, with its main military business in jeopardy because the Ministry of Defence wanted fewer helicopters, Westland was in difficulties; and in spring 1985 it began to look for a financial rescue. Sir John Cuckney, a banker who had begun his career with M15, became chairman. Cuckney saw Westland's future with Sikorsky, the American manufacturer, who wanted to enter the European market via a subsidiary. In this he soon had the support of the Department of Trade and Industry, under Leon Brittan.

The Sikorsky deal became a crisis because it caused a Cabinet row, but also because the government could not reconcile its commitment to non-intervention with its earnest wish to interfere, and in any case was in two minds about what its policy was. The Ministry of Defence under Michael Heseltine had been slow to recognize a crisis coming at Westland. When the crisis finally came, Heseltine's specific objection to the Sikorsky proposal was that it implied that the British government would buy Sikorsky Black Hawk helicopters, which the services did not want, and would weaken

Europe's defence industrial capacity. To prevent this, Heseltine brought about the "European rescue plan" for Westland, involving a joint venture with Italian and French companies for the manufacture of military helicopters. It was implied that the Sikorsky deal would cut Westland off from European orders in future. The European plan also required the commitment of British taxpayers' money, though perhaps (or perhaps not) in smaller amounts overall than the Sikorsky deal.

Only then did the Prime Minister become seriously involved. Her objections to Heseltine's scheme are only sketchily explained in the sources reviewed here, perhaps because they really were as crude as Magnus Linklater and David Leigh suggest. The Heseltine proposal was European, and she dislikes Europe; it involved the open use of public money, and she dislikes public expenditure. Moreover she seems to have been influenced by Cuckney, who had her former assistant Gordon Reece on his payroll. Whatever her views really were, she enforced them on Heseltine in a series of manoeuvres which left the political nation pretending to be astonished. The first was leaking criticism to the press; to this Heseltine replied in kind. The second was the abandonment of a Cabinet committee meeting scheduled for December 13. The third was to procure and leak a letter from Sir Patrick Mayhew, the Solicitor-General, to discredit Heseltine's position. The fourth, executed through Leon Brittan, was to put pressure on British Aerospace to withdraw from the European rescue plan. These schemes could only succeed by stealth, so it was necessary to mislead the public and the House of Commons. The hapless Brittan was responsible for doing so, thus riding his leader of a turbulent Defence Secretary, but also causing his own downfall.

We can now begin to enjoy at least some information about last winter's transactions, though nothing to compare with the White House tapes, the *Washington Post* disclosures, and the televised proceedings of the Senate Watergate Committee. In *Not With Honour* Linklater and Leigh dot the *is* and cross the *ts* of the affair, adding circumstantial detail to the *us-legend* of military-industrial politics. They rely extensively on a good cuttings library and the evidence given to the Trade and Defence Committees of the House of Commons. The Defence Committee's own two reports, published on July 23, are, until something better comes along, the fuel on which the Westland affair is presently running. The contrast between the book and the reports shows something of the strengths and weaknesses both of investigative journalism and of formal parliamentary enquiry.

Linklater and Leigh have done a marginally better job in getting the facts out and putting them in context. The Defence Committee's Third Report describes the present position of the international helicopter industry more intelligibly, but its account lacks historical depth and leaves the question of civilian helicopters to the Trade and Industry Committee, which has not yet reported. It is less concerned than Linklater and Leigh with who did what to whom and more concerned with the commercial and political logic of military procurement, but it does not ask straight questions about the competence of Westland's present or former management. The Fourth, or Dirty Tricks Report is more narrowly based on its own minutes of evidence than Linklater and Leigh's account of such episodes as the cancellation of the December 13 Economic Committee or the leaking of Sir Patrick Mayhew's "material inaccuracies" letter on January 6. The result, though, is that the Committee has got very close, by forensic methods, to the conclusions reached by Linklater and Leigh from a much wider range of more anecdotal material. Neither source believes the Prime Minister's assertion that the unattributable release of selective quotations from the letter had some other purpose than to discredit Heseltine. Neither source believes that the Cabinet Secretary, Sir Robert Armstrong, acted with integrity during his enquiry into the leak. And although the Committee, in bold type, exonerates Mrs Thatcher from detailed knowledge of events on January 6 surrounding the leak, it makes no effort to hide its scepticism about her behaviour before and afterwards. She wanted Heseltine fixed, and cared little about the

detail of how it was done.

Linklater and Leigh describe Mrs Thatcher's handling of the whole affair as "hypocrisy of a high order". Pretending to allow "market forces" to play a role in a business where no real market has existed for years, she tried every political means to ensure that her will was obeyed. The Defence Committee is less worried about ambiguities in the State's relationship with the defence industries. It openly supports Heseltine's analysis of the possible consequences of the Sikorsky deal, while Linklater and Leigh take no clear view. The Committee is much more worried about the government's obvious contempt for the House of Commons and determination to protect its historic right to deceive the public. These are

## Free for all

Charles Moore

DAVID HOWELL  
*Blind Victory: A study in income, wealth and power*  
191pp. Hamish Hamilton. £10.95.  
0 241 11743 7

The author of this book played a part in the preparation of the "new Conservatism" which came to power in 1979. It was he, David Howell tells us, who invented the word "privatization". He was one of the young, thoughtful Tory politicians who learnt from Edward Heath's mistakes. Mrs Thatcher made him Secretary of State for Energy and then for Transport. Then she dispensed with his services.

It is a tribute to Mr Howell that this background information is not central to an understanding of his book. There is a vogue now for books by politicians in disfavour (Francis Pym has been and gone; Michael Heseltine and Jim Prior and their ghosts are soon to come). The pleasure of these works – such as it is – is that they attack Mrs Thatcher, and it is nothing but this spice of rudeness that induces publishers to swallow two hundred pages of stuff about how "we" should "face the future", help "our young people", build a "new spirit of cooperation" and "face difficult choices as when necessary". *Blind Victory* is not such a book. It is neither so rancorous nor so banal. But Howell's history does explain the book's title, at least, and a false opposition which he sets up between free market dogmatism and his own true way.

The victory in 1979 was "blind", according to Howell, because the new Government, rightly rejecting collectivism and macro-economic planning, failed to shake off the prejudices in favour of central government economic control and made a totem of the Public Sector Borrowing Requirement. In doing so, he says, it ignored the central fact about the modern economy – that government control is not only usually misdirected, but is simply ineffective. With the speed of communication, the coming of information technology and the consequent breakdown of large institutions, economic activity is fragmented. The signals of the market are now so quick, so sophisticated and so many that no administrative machine can begin to register them all, let alone direct them. Work patterns are flexible, ownership is more diffused, all the dividing lines are blurred. In the 1930s, Keynes (whom Howell admires) was able to enunciate a general economic theory. If he were alive today, Howell believes, he would see that such generalization was no longer possible and that his prophecy of the decline of economists to the condition of "humble, competent people, on a level with dentists" was approaching fulfilment.

For Howell, this is all a good thing. The tendency of the modern economy is against collective power and towards individual emancipation. More people work for themselves, fewer people take orders from trade union leaders; they exert more control over their time, over the space in which they live, over the money which they accumulate. The all-observing telescreen which Orwell feared is instead a word-processor on which individuals are writing their own books and keeping their own

understandable differences of emphasis. The subject-matter, nevertheless, is the same, and both accounts can be read with profit and pleasure. Both sources, rather naively, imply that the behaviour of Prime Minister and Cabinet Secretary is somehow unprecedented. But the Westland affair is hardly the first occasion on which ministers and officials have bent truth and integrity to their own purposes, and it is unlikely to be the last. Ministers who leak half-truths are almost invulnerable, at least until the Prime Minister kicks them overboard to save the sledge: junior officials who leak the truth risk imprisonment. In the hallowed double-accountability – and – the principle – of – collective-Cabinet-responsibility. Long life to it.

services and inventing jolly games for their families. There are too many different things for Big Brother to watch.

These happy changes make the circumstances propitious for the advancement of Howellism, a doctrine based on de Tocqueville's notion of "self-interest rightly understood". Far from being a war of all against all, the operation of a liberal economy encourages co-operation. The market does not work if traders keep on knocking down one another's stalls, or if they all insist on different forms of payment. The householder is insecure if no one else is a householder. The "caring" service ceases to care if it removes all price mechanisms, all local contact, all private impulse, and takes its money and orders from a bureaucracy. In his prescription, Howell particularly emphasizes ownership. There is no point, he says, in exhorting wages to come down; listed workers should own shares in their concerns. The division between wages and capital causes hatred and need to exist.

All this is surely true; one's only complaint is that the way the argument is couched is a little unfair to free market beliefs and to Mr Thatcher. If there are people connected with this Government who think that a free market is nothing but ruthless competition for which no language of co-operation is appropriate, I have never met them. And although it is true that the Government has fallen short many times – that the privatization of British Telecom and British Gas does nothing to break up monopoly power, that taxation policies still discourage independence, that monetary targets in the early days were applied with a crudity which damaged the economy and set back sensible reform of local government – the astonishing thing is that the Government has, despite the qualifications, worked consistently in the direction which Howell wants. What he describes is the development of a free society. The Government should be given a little more of the credit for this – it would not have happened under Labour.

Although the book's subtitle mentions "power", this aspect does not get a full enough treatment. For a politician, Howell displays a remarkable intellectual integrity, but a surprising blandness about the nastier political problems. He is right that society becomes happier and more secure as more people have the power which comes from different forms of ownership. But this does not say enough about the sheer beastliness which everyone notices about modern Britain. There are people beyond the reach of ownership's healing power. They may not make up a large percentage of the population, but you do not need many people to destroy what others have carefully built. I do not think that Howell mentions riots or racial conflict or broken homes or broken windows. Clearly they could not be the main part of the book about our economic condition, but condition is affected by the ability of authority to enforce its decisions and to protect citizens. David Howell's economic optimism is subtle and prescient and very attractive, but *Blind Victory* does not lead us through the problem of how power and freedom can coexist.

POSTAGE: INLAND 18p ABOARD 28p

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## Interpreting the interpreters

John Dunn

RONALD DWORKIN  
*Law's Empire*  
470pp. Harvard University Press. £16.95 (paperback, £6.95).  
0 674 51835 7

"What is Law?" Ronald Dworkin's ambitious new book begins with a brief and deceptively simple question. Over 400 pages later, it ends with a vivid expression of faith. Law, he claims, is defined in the last instance "by attitude, not territory or power or process". The attitude which defines it is interpretative, self-reflective, "addressed to politics in the broadest sense", protestant, constructive, fraternal. For Dworkin, it is "an expression of how we are united in community though divided in project, interest and conviction. That is, anyway, what law is for us: for the people we want to be and the community we aim to become." As a view of what law is, this is somewhat less general than Thomas Hobbes's definition: "a Law to speak properly and accurately, is the speech of him who by Right commands somewhat to others to be done, or omitted". It also does not sound much like a thumbnail ethnography of the British bench, let alone of their Soviet or Iranian colleagues. If this is what law is "for us", who exactly are "we"? And if Dworkin believes that this is what law is for us, what are his grounds for believing anything of the kind?

To a British reader Dworkin's answer to the question of what law is displays a surprisingly prominent vein of intellectual and spiritual autobiography. What occasions this prominence is his initial insistence that there is no clear sense to the question of what law (or any other human practice) really amounts to except for some particular set of real persons. Most theories of law do not (at least consciously) accept this claim; and Hobbes's theory, notoriously, was founded upon rejecting it. The political point of Hobbes's theory was to confine interpretation as narrowly as possible to those entitled to command, and to do so precisely in order to damp down the incendiary consequences, addressed to politics in the broadest sense, of current protestant interpretations of *fraternity*. (Dworkin, in this respect at least, is modern history's revenge on Hobbes.) Hobbes remains, even today, the most impressive, though not of course the most up-to-date, defender of the view that there are objective and value-independent criteria for defining a legal system and determining what that system does or does not command. (A fine modern development of a similar line of thought far more sensitive to the variety of types of law is Herbert Hart's classic *The Concept of Law*.) The appeal of this view is evident enough. Law, surely, is a matter of social fact. We can tell what the laws of Iran now are without in the least sympathizing with the values of Islamic fundamentalism.

One reading of Dworkin makes him simply uninterested in this line of objection. The question from which he begins is not a question about the full range of institutions which happen to have been described as law in one language or another throughout human history. It is about why "we" treat law as a source of definite authority, even where its overt pronouncements are inconveniently discrepant (I am not sure that I do so treat it), about how and why the rule of law can be an inspiring political ideal, and about what sense, from the internal participant's point of view, "the argumentative character of Anglo-American legal practice" really makes. On this reading the relativization to Dworkin's own concerns is moderately explicit. If it would not endear him to Hobbes the concerns themselves are widely enough shared to make his thinking of keen interest to many contemporary readers.

But there is also a second reading of Dworkin, just as plainly his own, which makes him a far more challenging (and far more exposed) thinker. All legal systems, in his contention, consist quite largely of gaps in rules when they come to be applied. (Dworkin himself in fact believes that there is always in some sense a correct way to fill the gaps, where the rules apply at all. But it is the gaps themselves which matter in this instance.) Judging what the rules require is an exercise in creative interpretation.

quires a complex array of theories and a clear conception of the goals of the political community whose rules they are. Subordination and authority may be intrinsic to the character of law. But they cast no light on its most distinctive feature: the impetus towards an overall coherence or sense across a whole range of authoritative rules.

It is in the role of judge, with its distinctive responsibilities, preoccupations and opportunities, that the deep sense of law becomes clear. Dworkin's theory of law is a theory of how judges ought to judge, a theory of principled adjudication; and the central burden of his criticism of the theories of law offered by his predecessors is the inability of any of these to furnish a finally satisfying answer to the question of how judges should in fact judge. We might not care to address ourselves seriously, even in imagination, to the question of what the laws of Iran now are. But if we did so we could not hope to tell what they were without, in imagination, involving ourselves deeply with them, without, as Dworkin puts it, "joining" their practice. It is only the easy cases in law that are a blunt and reasonably ecumenical matter of fact. The hard cases – and hard cases arise incessantly in every society's law – require imaginatively committed participation for their resolution. The view of law as small islands of blunt fact surrounded by oceans of irredeemable (and equally factual) vagueness and discretion is accurate enough as far as it goes. But it is also crippling superficial.



A detail from Sandro Chia's "Genoa", 1980; it is taken from The New Image: Painting in the 1980s by Tony Godfrey (160pp. Phaidon. £19.95. 0 71452403 8).

## By the State, against the State

Martin Levine

TOM CAMPBELL, DAVID GOLDBERG, SHEILA  
McLEAN and TOM MULLEN (Editors)  
*Human Rights: From rhetoric to reality*  
262pp. Oxford: Blackwell. £27.50  
(paperback, £9.95).  
0 631 14361 0

Human rights are taken far more seriously in America than in Great Britain, where the dominant justification for government action is utilitarian, not rights-based. Similarly, most legal theory is positivist in Britain, not recognizing the existence of rights superior to legal statutes. This lack of emphasis on rights in Britain strikes Americans as odd, since Americans believe they inherited their rights from the English common law and Magna Carta. Recently, however, there has been a revival of interest in the idea of rights in Britain, due to the European Court of Justice, the work of scholars like Ronald Dworkin and proposals for a British charter of rights. And in *Human Rights* members of the University of Glasgow law department argue for the importance of the idea, both as rhetoric and as a source of specific legal doctrine.

The power of Dworkin's book comes from this second line of argument. But it is extremely difficult to disentangle it from the in some ways less interesting but better-controlled and defended line of argument suggested at the beginning and end of his book. *Law's Empire*, like almost all Dworkin's writing, is very much a work of advocacy. It advocates not merely his own distinctive jurisprudential doctrines but also his own brand of liberal political philosophy, well captured in the book's closing sentences. (Hobbes, of course, would have regarded this conjunction as fatal to the book's merits. But it is not necessary to share his verdict to feel the two elements intermittently a trifle at odds with one another.) As an advocate Dworkin is tirelessly fluent and endlessly inventive. He is also, for those who do not initially agree with him, often singularly unconvincing. *Law's Empire* certainly exemplifies these qualities. But it offsets them more effectively than the two collections of articles which have preceded it by dint of being a single piece of connected argument, a real book. It offers major extensions both to his jurisprudence and to his political theory.

The most interesting extension to his political theory involves a cunning counter-attack on its severest critics, philosophers like Alasdair MacIntyre, Michael Sandel and Charles Taylor, who see community rather than individual choice as the ground of human values. Law's empire for Dworkin – the title itself is a form of counter-attack – is a shared way of life,

the natural expression and appropriate habitat for a genuine community of principle. It is also in his view a uniquely appropriate habitat – indeed the sole genuine form of community now possible – for human beings as these really are. (Hence the disjunction in his conclusion between the present of the people we want to be and the future of the community which we aim to become.) There remains every reason to doubt the ultimate compatibility of his rejection of moral and legal scepticism and his commitment to equality of respect for the projects of all human beings. Law's empire may be protestant; but at least in this instance its protestantism is too thoroughly secularized to be convincingly coherent. (On this score Hobbes's *De Cive* still has an excellent case.) What can now be said, however, is that Dworkin has at least offered us a fuller and more carefully considered interpretation of what a modern community might actually consist in than any of liberalism's communitarian critics has yet contrived to muster.

But it is by its jurisprudential claims that his book will be in the end stand or fall. Here the most striking feature is the stress which he lays on the pervasiveness of interpretative concepts throughout human practices. For him all lawyers are necessarily philosophers, a diagnosis which some of them will scarcely regard as a compliment. But this vocational burden (or privilege) is itself merely a more acute version of the fate of all human beings as radical and constructive interpreters of a human and natural world which they are compelled to share. In the end the defence which he offers of the conception of integrity as implicit master value for adjudication is not merely an interesting and in some respects novel thesis about the character of law. It is also the emblem of his resistance to a wide array of modern scepticisms, of an insistence on seeing a multiplicity of human practices as exercises in discovery rather than sheer fiction.

If *Law's Empire* claims to disclose what law is like for us, who, finally, are "we"? As Professor of Jurisprudence at Oxford, Dworkin naturally spends a fair amount of his time thinking about British law. But his imaginative centre of gravity still remains rather firmly on the other side of the Atlantic, above all in the role of self-appointed philosopher to the American Supreme Court. I doubt if *Law's Empire* does capture very successfully what law is for most inhabitants of the British Isles today. But for a work of such indefatigable advocacy it is a surprisingly fraternal book, open, busy, engaging and teeming with ideas. It will give many readers (including some who have found his previous work more irritating than compelling) a great deal of pleasure and instruction.

tics: usually non-utilitarian moral reasoning is used to support individual claims; believers in differing moral theories may find common ground that certain claims have been supported as rights; these rights have a strong presumptive force even against rival utilitarian claims about the public interest; and they feature in powerful political and legal arguments about what the law should be, even though not yet recognized by existing legal rules.

The thirteen papers in *Human Rights* range across medical issues, rights of particular groups (women, defendants, trade unionists), and the right of public assembly. Several of the authors agree in finding a "paradox" in the observation that while the human rights to be protected are generally rights *against* the State, usually the only institution that can give effective protection is that very State. The supposed paradox lies in the ideal of morally appropriate State action, the duty correlative to individual human rights, which is used to criticize the current practice of the State.

Occasionally, rhetoric about rights can be mush. It is insufficient merely to refer to international declarations, court decisions, or even the utterances of judges, as if they decided ethical issues, or to assume a moral right should be recognized merely because the word "rights" has been used in political discourse. Nor is it instructive to point out that a certain idea of a right (like individual self-determina-

tion), if taken by itself as an absolute, would be inconsistent with some existing British law.

Instead, what is needed is analysis of the proper scope and weight of particular rights as claimed, and how they fit together in specific situations with other rights and with utilitarian goals. The idea of this book is to supply such analysis. Thus Tom Mullen wisely argues that analysis in terms of the purpose of a right like free speech can best guide judges in applying the general idea to decide concrete cases. And Garry Maher points out that debate on controversial issues in the criminal process would be illuminated if we started by asking what rights require specific application to the situation of a criminal defendant. Such analysis will often lead to different conclusions from those drawn from the often misleading "balancing" of the whole community's interest in law and order against the interests of an individual defendant.

An occasional error intrudes. A "special court whose task it is to rule on the constitutionality of ordinary legislation" is not part of the US legal system, for there all courts afford supremacy to constitutional rights. But such a court (a new committee of the House of Lords?) might be worth considering in Britain, to answer the argument that ordinary British judges are unfit for, and should be kept from, the task of giving reality to theoretical human rights.



# The pleasures of diversity

Eugen Weber

BERNARD BRAUDEL:  
*L'Identité de la France: Espace et histoire*  
367pp. Paris: Arthaud-Flammarion. 98fr.  
270030411 X  
Une *Léçon d'histoire de Fernand Braudel*  
254pp. Paris: Arthaud-Flammarion. 85fr.  
270030557 4

It must have been in 1951 that someone put into my hands a copy of Fernand Braudel's *La Méditerranée et le monde méditerranéen à l'époque de Philippe II*. I certainly hadn't bought it, for the partly volume (nearly 1,200 pages published in 1949, at the author's expense) was far beyond a student's means. But I remember how, once started, I read on through the night into the bleary morning, dazzled by the way the writing interweaves time and space, theory and anecdote, sailors, ships, currents and winds, rapine and trade, republics and empires. A model of living history, at least for this apprentice historian; and an inspiration.

At that time, Braudel, not yet fifty, was teaching at the Collège de France. Until his recent election there, in place of Lucien Febvre, little of his academic life had been spent in France; he had been in Algeria 1923-32, in Brazil 1935-38, and in German prison camps 1940-45. François Goguel, also a prisoner of the Germans, had composed his *Politique des parisiens sous la Troisième République* (1946) in captivity; Braudel conceived and drafted his masterpiece in similar circumstances. After 1947, when it was accepted as his doctoral thesis, he never looked back. Perhaps, also, he never attained the same lush greatness. The sciences of man prompted a turn to more verifiable conjectures, but less lively ones: demography, statistics, the *longue durée*. The cast of thousands gave way to millions, but faceless and less colourful; the history, which is about human beings, gave way to theory, which is about theories.

Then, there were the politics of power, the struggle for acceptance, the possibilities and responsibilities of success: the VI<sup>e</sup> Section of the École Pratique des Hautes Études, the Maison des Sciences de l'Homme that he founded, the *Annales* that he ran between 1956 and 1969 and helped to turn into an institution, which wasn't quite what he had wanted. There was the insistent concept of the *longue durée* and its pretensions to orthodoxy. Why excommunicate *histoire événementielle* just because you prefer topics or trends? Does a fondness for pasta prohibit appreciation of cassoulet? I confess that I lost sight of Braudel during that time. But his conceptions continued on the grand scale and, when he returned to what I call History, it was with a study even more ambitious and monumental than *La Méditerranée*: a study of material Civilization and Capitalism throughout the early modern world in which, once again, "le systématique s'efface devant l'empirique". A canvas of such dimensions was bound to exhibit imperfections, to evoke criticism (notably sharp in the TLS of January 21, 1983) as well as eulogy. But it showed the old Braudel back in his stride, greedy for colour and action, recalling Febvre's dictum that the historian is like the ogre in the fairy tale: aroused when he sniffs the scent of human flesh.

Besides, great historians have always run their risks. Braudel was of that race, and probably wrote what and how he did because he could not help himself. It is safer to stop writing when you are at the top; but hard to do so when you are in love with what you do. Revealingly, Braudel's first work and his last begin with declarations of love, to the Mediterranean, and to France: a passion and an excitement that he communicates – vibrantly at his most inspired, effectively even when he flags.

Sent to press shortly before Braudel's sudden death in November 1985, *L'Identité de la France* was to be the first volume of a new trilogy which would bring the wandering historian home and let him illumine Europe, the world and the *longue durée* "elle d'abord, elle surtout", by way of the *hexagone*. It has, therefore, to be read as the introduction it was intended to be, as a rehearsal and *entrée en matière* for developments to come; and as a work meant to be accessible to a broader pub-

lic, especially a French public. For Braudel, who believes that a country's history is best understood and written by its own, has written this one in a style which mirrors the best and the less good of the French tradition: unafraid of rhetoric, wordiness and lyricism, but bubbling over with a sensual appreciation of every part of France and of the evocative possibilities of place-names – Jura, Vosges, Bresse, Vendée. The French love to savour France, as they do its products; understandably, Braudel rolls localities round his pen, instinctively confident of shared sensibilities with a public which the recital of past menus warms like a familiar song. Since the identity of France is about a lot of places, the attuned reader will find much vicarious delight here in their evocation.

There is a great deal more than this, though, in pages which distil the gist of many recent studies. Despite its title, the book turns more about French particularities, and about the way in which the enterprise called France forged an identity above and beyond persistent local ones. All nations, Braudel tells us, are divided, but France illustrates that rule too well. The acquisition of new provinces or territories by marriage, inheritance or conquest, did not establish the same régime in all, or bring provincial differences to an end. Interested above all in public order, in raising taxes, ensuring the sway of its "justice" and the passage of provisions and troops, the monarchy came to terms with local privileges, traditions and forms of speech. The cultural divisions which ensued in a territory formally united persisted for a long time. As recently as 1938 Lucien Febvre could still write back from the South-West to comment on "how exotic and faraway these regions" seemed to him. Superimposed on the jigsaw of *pays* and *patois*,

came the historic discord: "Protestants against Catholics, Jansenists against Jesuits, Republicans against Royalists, Blues against Reds, Right against Left, Dreyfusard against Anti-dreyfusard, Collaborators against Resistants. . . . Division rests in the French house whose unity is no more than a veneer, a superstructure, a wager."

Like their ancestors, the Gauls, the French are better at civil than at foreign war. Braudel remarks that, except for 1914-18, the country has experienced no long patriotic war. Every one of its conflicts, in the days of Jeanne d'Arc or of Henry IV, as of Carnot, Pétain and de Gaulle, was more or less involved – also – with civil war. Yet Braudel is an easterner (like Febvre and Marc Bloch), and he will not accept that France cannot be one. It lives between the plural and the singular; and its space, like the experience it has had in time, unifies as much as it divides its parts. Hence, where the first part of the book deals with diversity, the second part is about cohesion. Notwithstanding the inhibiting divisions involved, Braudel expounds the elements of unity to be found in France's geographic diversity, the complementarities inherent in differences between neighbouring regions, the effects of borders that bind more than they isolate, the struggle to tame and defend provinces newly acquired, hence the relentless military effort – itself an instrument of unity – that affects not just the borderlands but the whole State.

Curiously, Braudel concludes – at least in this book – that it was not so much trade, or cultural pressures, which unified the country, as the army crossing and recrossing the realm and overwhelming all its parts with its presence and demands. He points out that, where in the early nineteenth century some 150,000 migrant

workers roamed the country, between 1786 and 1713 alone close to a million people were shifted about by the army, a population as essentially different from that which the *levée en masse* set in motion at the century's end. The royal administration apart, the army thus appears as the most potent agent of unification; war and its servants as the great mixer of language, culture, economy and habit. A little unexpected (especially since old régime troops, like many migrant workers, mixed little with civilians), this proposition deserves some thought. Nevertheless, as the volume ends, French diversity has been well demonstrated, French identity less so. Which is a pity, because Braudel is right to stress the French *terroir* between plural and singular; the former is only too evident, the latter too easily taken for granted, yet it is there, and waiting for a convincing exposition.

Pending further investigation, one might surmise that gastronomic enterprise and patriotic gourmandizing eventually provided the régime (and the cures?) that divided France least, and best reconciled the French to their fractured identity.

Braudel would not have scorned such a conjecture, for he enjoyed intellectual games, aware that one could draw from them both fun and profit. This aspect comes out well in *Une Léçon d'histoire de Fernand Braudel*, the discussions of the colloquium held at Chateaufort to honour him, only five weeks before his death. The central figure here appears at his most playful: witty, bantering, facetious. But *Une Léçon d'histoire* is more than an account of the master having fun, and more than the average collection of conference papers. Three days and three main themes reflect the progress and the effects of Braudel's interests: de Mediterranean, Capitalism, France. The participants are concise, their contributions bracing, sometimes brilliant. Notably, Hélène Ahrweiler on Byzantium and the Mediterranean, Gérard Jordani on Capitalism and Europe's world dominion, Jean Guillemin on prehistoric agriculture and trade in what is now the *hexagone*, Etienne Julliard commenting on a chapter of *L'Identité*: "La géographie a-t-elle inventé la France?"

Well-organized and unpretentious, this little book is well worth its price, the more so since it allows us to hear a good deal also by and about Braudel. He cites his "true masters" – Febvre and Bloch, especially Bloch, for whom "there is no history of France, there is a history of Europe"; better still, "no history of Europe, but a history of the world". He explains that the memory of our historical past conditions our evolution, but so does the fallout of forgotten pasts, between which and the present de continuity is never complete. Relations, sympathies, antipathies, preserve, reflect, repeat and reinforce experience long-forgotten. "L'histoire profonde, l'histoire de longue durée . . . commande les histoires superficielles." Braudel rejoices when Ahrweiler points out French solidarity with Poland, or indifference to Cypriot affairs. For Greeks, Poland is a Catholic affair; for the French, Cyprus evokes no natural sympathies. The sack of Byzantium by Venice in 1204 explains not only present attitudes, but present decisions.

More personal reflections reveal generational frictions, professional frustrations ("J'ai toujours été poussé par des gens bienveillants vers les voies de garage"); appreciation of those who, like Le Roy Ladurie and Georges Duby, "write divinely", as he does himself. And he concludes (about the three days of the colloquium, but it could be about his life, however difficult it may have been), "I've had a lot of fun." So will the reader of this book.

Pugnacity, liveliness, mischievousness, and passion. Braudel was a passionate fighter for and passionate lover of history. And if his history is not always one's own, it always is. Michelin's immortal words, *vault le détroit*. Yet what he wrote will live not by his theories but by his zest, by his capacity to re-create movement and action, to communicate his own excitement and to excite the reader. As he himself points out, his history is a style, a mastery of language and, it may be said, of art. One must agree with Theodore Zeldin who, with friendly malice, describes this "human scientist" as an artist and a poet. Which is what the best historians are.

STEPHEN ROMER

# Questions of identity

François Duchêne

DEAN PEABODY  
*National Characteristics*  
256pp. Cambridge University Press. £27.50.  
0521304490

This study is not quite what its title might lead one to suppose. In fact, it would be more accurate to say that it compends two books in one. The first and official text is a statistical piece of sociological research designed to establish the academic bona fides of comparisons of national character. The other, ostensibly subordinate, but bursting from the seams of at least half the text, is a socio-historical review of the cultures of the main European (and some other) countries. This is less "rigorous" but far more stimulating.

The cause of this curious dichotomy seems to be the state of intellectual politics, or at least of what the author feels them to be. Of course, it is obvious that comparing national characters is the kind of vast inchoate subject, associated with the nineteenth century, which professionalists view today with deep suspicion. But there seems to be more. Dean Peabody defies social scientists who gladly compare class differences, despite variances within them, to demonstrate why such variances should invalidate studies of national differences; and denies that to investigate national character is "false and evil", a mental slackness next door to racism. He clearly feels he is breaking new ground against entrenched disapproval. Still reacting, as an American, to the differences between Europeans which surprised him as a young man after the war, he has made it his business in this book to make a limited, but he hopes strategic, theoretical point. This is that a sci-

tifically respectable method can be devised to delineate national patterns of culture; that this can be done through the perceptions of "ordinary" people; and that these judgments, far from having to be misleading stereotypes, can yield partially but useful evidence.

Accordingly, the method is the ostensible message of the book. Professor Peabody claims to innovate in two ways. One is by attempting a multilateral study which dispenses with the frequent American model (the objects, plausibly, that it is exceptional). There is little doubt that he does demonstrate, by example, the potential, even the fascination, of comparative studies of national characteristics. The other claim, in pinning down those "traits", is to have found a technique, in his polls, for helping to discount national prejudice.

Peabody put a common questionnaire to national groups of between forty and fifty of the inevitable students – in their first year in university or last year in secondary schools – from Britain, France, West Germany, Italy, Austria, Finland and Greece. The date, it should be noted, was far back as 1969-70 (thereby must hang some gory tale). They were asked which of a set of fifty-six "traits" best expressed their views of each other's national characteristics, as well as their own, and for good measure those of the Russians and Americans as well. (In addition, North and South Italian groups judged each other and the Greeks the Turks, while the Finns distinguished between the East and West Germans and use was made of older findings from the Philippines.) The results, then, relate several national self-perceptions with the views of foreigners. That certainly offers useful points of comparison.

The questions posed also seem to have

the poet who would spurn Western values and yet who recognizes his own atavistic submission to the dictates of "les blancs". As for Céline, the apocryphal country of Bambolagrancia acts as locale for Bardamu's intensified confrontation with horror and as a stage in the journey to the end of the night.

The chapters on these and other writers are not intended to be read as discrete units, as the recurring attention Miller gives to intertextuality, allusion and plagiarism indicates. Indeed, he insists that "the peculiar empty profile called 'Africa'" gives rise to a literary phenomenon which extends beyond any private thematizing. The absence of any positive external referent is the precondition for texts to become self-referring; the empty myth of Africa enables those who write about it to brood self-consciously over their representational lacunae. Hence *Heart of Darkness*, with its prevailing sense of disorientation and indeterminacy, is to be read as an allegory of narrative which has lost its way and as symptomatic of "the writer's experience of alienation from his own meaning, of alienation as meaning itself". Such alienation is nowhere more acute than in the Mallian novelist Yambo Oudougum's *Le Devoir de la violence*, an African story which parodies the European view of Africa as a continent without history.

This emphasis on textual introspection leads to a series of subtle critical analyses, but it also precludes any sustained concern with the historical context. Whereas Edward Said's *Orientalism* (to which this book acknowledges a debt) reveals the ideological imperatives which contributed to the myth of the "Orient", Miller's study largely eschews any examination of French political and economic motives towards Africa. Consequently, the complexities of the literary response to the slave trade and to imperialist policy are ignored, and major contributors to the colonial debate such as Jules Verne, Pierre Loti and Alphonse Daudet receive little or no attention. Thus the reader is denied that historical "point de repère" which might have provided a context for this "unhappy Orientalism".

But Miller is not primarily concerned with chronicling the time-honoured conventions of Eurocentrism. Instead, his book proposes to demonstrate that exposure to an unsettling cultural otherness, albeit vicarious, generates important reflexes in individual poets and novelists. In Baudelaire, he discerns the ambivalent interplay of eroticism and disgust, of yearning for exotic self-fulfilment and fear of self-dissolution in darkness. For Rimbaud, the "nègre" (meaning both Negro and ghost-writer) is a parodic, self-imposed identity for

emerged from more subtle thought than is sometimes given to them. They were drawn up in fourteen sets, each of four adjectives or "traits" (two positive and two negative), each offering aspects of a close web of qualities. These were a kind of literary equivalent of quadratic equations, designed to separate the emotive elements in the responses from the relatively objective, "descriptive" ones.

The results are rather encouraging, from the author's point of view, in that "differences between nationality targets are much more important than differences between groups of judges". In other words, if the foreigners' views of a country are prejudices, they are surprisingly often shared, at least to some degree, by natives themselves. Curiously, even national self-approval is not universal. Though the English self-estimates, relative to the consensus, were exceptionally high, the French took an unexpectedly poor view of the national character. The initial group of Germans refused to co-operate and another had to be brought in the following year. Were the French being subversive? It would not be beyond the Ubuesque traditions of the *lycées*. Probably not, but one would like to know more about the circumstances.

More generally, if the identikit portraits culled from the answers seem broadly recognizable, they inevitably have a little of that abstract air which serves horoscope writers so well. Peabody admits they "do not represent the more complex and subtle features of national character". This raises a question which even a total consensus would not dissipate. All the respondents, including the natives, tend to agree that the Italians and French are lazy and the British hard-working. The consensus, except of the Greeks, who seem strikingly better informed, is that the French are mildly "trustful". The patterns of answers of the Finns about the Swedes somewhat resemble everyone else's views of the French and Americans, itself a *rapprochement* which might give the two of them some food for

thought. Converging perceptions, however suggestive up to a point, are no substitute for deeper insights.

Indeed, this seems to be Peabody's own view, for he compares his results for each country with the relevant socio-historical literature, and at some length. He relies a good deal on German sociology – the contrast of small community patterns of relations with those of mass society (*Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*). Dahrendorf's public and private virtues, Weber's ideas of religion and culture – but is eclectic. He does not disdain classics like Mme de Staël, Stendhal or Tocqueville though he mainly looks around him to such as Lipset, Gorer, Glyn, Crozier, Peyrefitte, Barzani, and many others, the professionals and the worldly. Ultimately, the insights of these cultivated observers tend to be the real yardsticks for his "empirical" study, the ones at least that bring the comparisons alive; it is here, too, that the discussion acquires some of the range and speculative boldness the title of the book suggests.

Though the discussion at this point is necessarily scattered, it nevertheless confirms the rich possibilities of a comparative and historical social approach. References to such forces as the influences of property, the evolution of the State or the structures of religion, create a hunger for more systematic work precisely in this area. The potentials burst out of the text in these necessarily less "rigorous" sections, whereas one is left with more queries than answers after the apparent precisions of the statistics. Certainly, in an age of competition between cultures, their dynamics and persistence in the face of changes supposed to dwarf them need to be far better charted than they are. There is no suggestion of either/or here, since all usable forms of evidence should be mutually reinforcing. Yet one senses that a desire to cross the more adventurous fields of cultural history may be manoeuvring behind Peabody's careful concern with method. His prose livens up when he enters them.

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# Brought to heel

W. G. Beasley

SHUNSUKE TSURUMI  
An Intellectual History of Wartime Japan  
1931-1945  
136pp. Routledge and Kegan Paul, £20.  
0710300727

There is a class of Japanese writing, known as *Nihonjin Ron*, or "discussions of the Japanese", which is concerned with such topics as Japan's place in the world, Japanese attitudes towards it, and problems of Japanese national identity. This book, despite its seemingly academic title, belongs in that context. It consists of a series of rather diffuse essays, each of which describes an event or feature of Japanese history within the period circumscribed by the Manchurian Incident of 1931 and the surrender in 1945, then summarizes certain aspects of Japanese intellectual experience concerning it.

Shunsuke Tsurumi identifies his purpose as being "to examine a deviation in order to reveal the essential characteristics of a national culture". To this end he organizes his book loosely round the theme of *avakō*. The word is difficult to translate, or even to define, but it refers broadly to an intellectual change of course, in which one's ideas are re-aligned in accordance with newly perceived realities of contemporary society. Between 1931 and 1945, when the term was fashionable in Japan, it was used chiefly of those who renounced radical or liberal ideas in favour of conformity with the prevailing sentiments of nationalism and loyalist orthodoxy. Because it commonly followed imprisonment, or even torture by the Thought Police, Tsurumi takes it to be "conversion under pressure of state power". He seeks explanations for it, other than the simple one of brutality. He also considers some examples of those who resisted it.

As part of the background which induced conformity he emphasizes two elements in Japanese society. One is insularity, reflecting both geographical isolation and two centuries of national seclusion under the Tokugawa rulers between 1640 and 1850. This has heightened the Japanese sense of community, he says, making it difficult for men to stand apart from their fellows: *tenkō*, after all, was the act of abandoning ideas which were not at the time acceptable to the majority of Japanese. The other element was a belief in the existence of a uniquely Japanese political culture, focusing on the emperor, something which nineteenth-century leaders had deliberately fostered as a necessary condition of modernization, only for it to become an article of faith for their twentieth-century successors, especially in the Army. It set Japan apart from the world at large, making the supposedly universal values of Western political thought inapplicable. In other words, the convictions that were to be renounced were by definition un-Japanese. By contrast, a commitment to "socialism in one country", like support for Japan's mission in Asia, could be called patriotic.

## Fact and opinion

Alan Booth

DICK WILSON  
The Sun at Noon: An anatomy of modern Japan  
265pp. Hamish Hamilton, £12.95.  
0241 113392

"The Western reader of a book about Japan", warns Dick Wilson in *The Sun at Noon*, "must resist the temptation to assume that, because something seems different from Western practice, it must therefore be worse." The former editor of the *Far Eastern Economic Review* is worried. It seems that his book will fall into the hands of clodpops. Elsewhere he describes his ideal reader: "[my] goal... is to present the minimum fact and opinion which a Westerner newly interested in Japan would want to know for a basic all-round understanding"; and he describes himself as "an observer who likes [the Japanese]... but has no axe to grind... and who has visited their country some forty times since 1953 without ever living there."

Logically, as Tsurumi sees it, resistance to *tenkō* came most readily from those who for one reason or another were not full members of the Japanese community: some Christians; women, who did not necessarily have a sense of "belonging" to a male-dominated culture; Koreans resident in Japan, especially those who were brought in as a kind of wartime slave-labour force; and non-Japanese within the Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere. These were people whom the state found it difficult to manipulate through the ideas of insularity and loyalty. This made them forerunners of a very different kind of Japan which emerged after 1945.

The last two chapters of the book deal with the atomic bombs and the surrender, which only relate to *tenkō* in so far as the anti-nuclear movement and post-war changes of mood can be described as a mass renunciation of what had gone before. A brief conclusion underlines two arguments: that *tenkō* is an example of confrontation between the state and the individual; and that it was contrary to the true tradition of Japan, which was "to refrain from making universal rules" and to avoid persecuting members of the community for mere non-conformity. For this reason the period 1931-45 is held to be an aberration, not the norm. Some Western readers will see this as apologetic, part of a growing habit in Japan of asserting that what was at fault was "the system", not "the people". Others will find it valuable as the expression of a point of view - perceptively stated - which was subordinate before 1945 and has become increasingly popular since. Because it is inherently particularistic, like the pre-war dogmas that it serves to criticize, it is also part of an internal debate among Japanese intellectuals that outsiders will not always find it easy to understand.



"Safari Land - Empty Heart" by Sakazune Atsuo is reproduced from Contemporary Japanese Prints: Symbols of a society in transition by Lawrence Smith (80pp. British Museum, £8.95, 07141 14251).

Wilson's reading on his subject is wide and undiscriminating, his circle of "staunch friends" even more so, and he quotes liberally and uncritically from what he has read and from what he has heard at dinner tables. The result is a compendium of other people's opinions, rarely scrutinized and sometimes contradictory. At one point Wilson speaks of "Japan's strong sense of interdependence with the Third World" and remarks a few pages further on that "again and again one comes back to the sense of Japan's having shaken off its Asian connections".

Though often broadly correct in its outlines, *The Sun at Noon* is equally often unreliable in its details. Wilson, it appears, does not speak or read Japanese and so commits several howlers (*keigo* is not a first-person pronoun but a generic term meaning "polite language"; *ikku-sai* is not deprecatory and is never used of one's own wife, only of someone else's). In other areas that do not much interest him - such as cinema and sport - he is equally misleading. It is absurd, for example, to assert that "two successive Americans... have come to

# Less than docile

Ann Waswo

WILLIAM W. KELLY  
Defiance and Defiance in Nineteenth-Century Japan  
322pp. Guildford: Princeton University Press, £22.60.  
0691 094179  
CAROL GLUCK  
Japan's Modern Myths: Ideology in the late Meiji period  
407pp. Guildford: Princeton University Press, £26.60.  
0691 054495

William A. Kelly is an anthropologist with considerable ability as a historian and in *Defiance and Defiance* he has written a contextual study of four "moments" of popular protest in the Shonai plain of north-eastern Japan during the nineteenth century. The first two, in 1840-41 and 1844, occurred at "the beginning of the end of the Tokugawa shogunate" that had dominated Japan since the early 1600s; the second two, in 1869-71 and 1874, at "the end of the beginning of the Meiji nation-state" that had come into tenuous being with the Restoration of 1868.

All four "moments" are thickly described. We learn not only who participated in the protests and why, but also how they participated. Benefiting as all of us Western students of Japan do from the work of amateur and professional historians in Japan, Kelly is able to explain the ways in which ordinary residents of the plain - farmers, merchants, brewers and the like - circumvented the restrictions imposed on public gatherings, the symbolism of the banners they held up, and the clever word-play in the slogans and verses they recited.

His account is very definitely not a portrait of random outbursts against authority - the received view of peasant and other uprisings of the time. Instead, Kelly presents a lively and nuanced picture of popular manipulation of extant conventions for expressing grievances in order to obtain redress of such specific injustices as rigged tax formulas, arbitrary levies, and the use of public funds for private gain. Moreover, he resists the temptation, to which others have succumbed, to fit the protests he explicates into a rigid typology.

Carol Gluck's *Japan's Modern Myths* tackles the nation as a whole and the thorny issue of ideology in the late Meiji period (1889-1912). A historian who is widely read in anthropology and sociology, she joins ranks with those post-Marxist theorists who see ideology as an essential component of any social system: it both reflects and constructs reality, making social life meaningful to those who live it.

Organized around two events, the promulgation of a constitution in 1889 and the death of the Meiji emperor in 1912, the book contains a wealth of information about an evolving ideological discourse that engages not only bureaucrats in direct service to the state, but also scholars, journalists, priests, landlords, and other members of "the ascendant social orders". Although the analysis focuses, understandably enough, on the articulate producers of meaningful notions about Japan, it also manages to provide tantalizing glimpses of the ways in which fairly ordinary people interpreted the hortatory messages they received.

What emerges is a portrait of considerable diversity and flux, not of the tightly controlled process of indoctrination from above that features prominently in the older literature on the subject. No one individual, group or institution spoke with complete authority (although quite a few claimed they did), nor did their speeches meet with instant acceptance. And yet, "futile and inconsistent" though the process was, an orthodoxy of sorts was established by the end of the period. Centred on the Imperial institution, loyalty and notions of a family-state, it amounted to a fairly loose formulation of civil values that Japanese of the time could and did respond to in differing ways. Only later, in the 1930s and early 1940s, did the self-appointed custodians of this orthodoxy succeed in silencing all voices but their own.

Both books have minor flaws - Kelly's, for example, contains a few chunks of jargon, and Gluck's relies somewhat to excess on metaphor - but these and other blemishes are more than compensated for by the fresh perspective on modern Japanese history their authors provide. Transgressing established boundaries of periodization and breaking away from the undue reliance on the opinions of contemporary government officials that has characterized much previous research, they reveal a complicated Japan, in whose development many, and few, were active. It will take more, equally meticulous scholarship, I suspect, to unearth the image of a "uniquely" docile and malleable population, but a promising start has now been made.

dominate sumo". One had retired before Wilson submitted his manuscript and the other has not won a tournament.

A more serious difficulty is the chirpy manner in which Wilson assumes the role of Japan's - or the Japanese government's - champion on issues which require both sides to be objectively assessed. Frequently, the problem is not so much that he comes down on the wrong side as that he does not appear to understand what arguments and repercussions are involved. In the debate on educational reform, he tells us that "the conservative politicians have gradually built up a case for... putting some good old traditional virtues back into the classroom", but he does not explain what these "virtues" are, or mention the widespread concern about their link with a revival of pre-war style nationalism. The controversy over the Ministry of Education's alteration of textbooks in order to play down Japan's war-time aggression is dismissed by Wilson as the result of a single journalistic error. He does not address the question of why China and Korea continue to complain about the alterations, and why the

issue has now resurfaced in a new guise in proposed textbook, recently approved for use, presents the ancient myths of Japan's divine creation and of the divine lineage of the emperor as historical fact). On welfare, Wilson remarks that "the family system provides a cushion for almost everybody in need and so the Japanese do not need a state substitute", without appearing to see that this "cushion" is traditionally the responsibility of women alone, and that a continuing reliance on it greatly diminishes the possibility of their achieving any real equality, whatever the government may allow. On defence Wilson writes: "Churchillian: 'the tiny band of Self-Defence Volunteers still waits for recognition'. And no trade and other kinds of foreign relations... the unsuccessful who complain." The Japanese have become the ambassadors of egalitarianism.

The best thing about this book is that its crusading tone is so undisguised and its upshot conclusions so unqualified that only a clodpole will put it down without experiencing a desire to read further and deeper.

# Beyond range of pity

Jonathan Mirsky

YUE DAIVUN and CAROLYN WAKEMAN  
To the Storm: The odyssey of a revolutionary Chinese woman  
405pp. University of California Press, £12.25.  
0520 055802

In the summer of 1966, at a Peking school for girls from high-ranking intellectual families, the students forced their headmistress, one of China's first Western-educated women, to crawl through an underground drain. Then they beat her to death. Yue Daiyun describes this episode in *To the Storm*; then tells us that "These teen-age girls, ordinarily shy, mild and gentle, had somehow become capable of unimaginable cruelty."

Yue's book is a terrifying memoir of more than two decades of party-directed persecution, the most vivid account to date of the violence of the Maoist years, and an unanswerable refutation of any suggestion that China's agony only began during the decade of the Cultural Revolution, 1966-76.

The pace and energy of *To the Storm* are provided by Carolyn Wakeman, an American who periodically teaches English in Peking, where Yue is associate professor of Chinese literature at the university. After Yue came to Berkeley, where Wakeman is based, they collaborated for two years on this record of thirty years of anti-intellectual campaigns. Although neither woman knew the other's language well, Wakeman has convincingly translated Yue's experiences and sentiments into her own words, synthesis and sequences. Wakeman makes clear, however, that her collaborator returned to China without seeing the final rewrite. This may save Yue if in some future Chinese convulsion she is charged with having libelled the motherland.

Yue's book demonstrates the enthusiasm with which millions of intellectuals, much older than the murderous Peking schoolgirls, engaged in tormenting each other because the

party gave them the chance. "Always in China, when someone is placed in another category and classified as an enemy, he is moved outside the range of pity. Even the most extreme treatment is then justified." Until 1957, Yue, the party secretary of her academic department, and a devout Maoist, had done her share of purging others, including the execution of a harmless landlord, and the compelling of doctors to make up the party's quota of victims among her colleagues. She concedes, "I thought it was necessary in a class struggle to kill those who were guilty."

But in 1957, despite her unswerving Maoism and energy in victimizing others, Yue was suddenly designated a Rightist. During the next twenty-two years she was expelled from the party, sent repeatedly to labour in the countryside, ostracized by her comrades and most of her friends; she failed to shield her children from condemnation as the "children of rats". Her husband, also a university lecturer - a sort of Chinese Vicar of Bray - did virtually anything to save his own skin, including working for the Gang of Four. A fellow victim gave Yue some advice: "Now we are enemies of the Party... we must admit we are guilty... only in this way can we help the Party by confirming the correctness of its policy."

Almost twenty-three years later, in 1979, as is so often the case in China when the line changes, Yue was coldly informed that her conviction and torment had been "an error". No one apologized, but she was offered back her party membership; with thirty years' service she would now be honoured as a "veteran Party member". She tells us that for a moment or two she hesitated, remembering her murdered friends, her mother's agony, her children's years of disgrace. She suspected that the apparition who was offering her the honour did not even believe that the party had made a mistake. But she accepted anyway - because "the Party alone could lead China forward".

Nothing in Yue Daiyun's previous 386 pages exposing party malice and sadism prepares us for this submissive penultimate line.

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# A saving superiority

Delia Davin

NIEN CHENG  
Life and Death in Shanghai  
496pp. Grafton Books, £12.95.  
0 246 12948 4

"How can I remember every sentence we ever spoke ten years ago?" Nien Cheng demanded of her interrogator in a Shanghai prison. The question could be turned against her, for in this memoir long dialogues are reproduced as if the writer could indeed recall them verbatim. Such minor irritants are insignificant, however, beside the achievement of the book which movingly describes the miseries inflicted by the Cultural Revolution on the author, her friends and associates.

One of the proclaimed aims of the Cultural Revolution was to rid China of all traces of foreign imperialist influence. It followed that Shanghai, once the greatest centre of such influence, was hard hit in the upheavals. Nien Cheng, a rich, foreign-educated widow who had worked for Shell in Shanghai, was an obvious target. Her home was looted by Red Guards in 1966. Soon afterwards she was arrested on suspicion of spying for the British and kept in solitary confinement for six and a half years. Despite harsh treatment and enormous pressure to make a confession, she steadfastly protested her innocence. On her release in 1973 she was told that her only daughter had committed suicide five years earlier. Persistent enquiries revealed that the girl had in fact been beaten to death by Red Guards.

Of course, all too many Chinese can tell a similar story, but certain factors make this one special. Numerous prisoners of the revolution, including Yue Daiyun (whose book is also reviewed on this page) had been committed to the party, working for it and believing in it. Nien Cheng had always thought of the communists in the third person. With no political faith to destroy, she was spared the agony of wondering whether she or the party was

wrong. She was also distinguished from the great mass of her compatriots by wealth and privilege. Before her arrest she employed three servants and lived in a house with nine rooms and four bathrooms. Her manservant dealt with the telephone, with callers and with the neighbourhood committee, acting as a buffer between her and the petty annoyances of life in People's China. Cushioned from ordinary life, she was sometimes insensitive to the impression she made on others, as when, with the Red Guards actually in occupation of her house, she ordered a breakfast of coffee, toast, butter and Cooper's marmalade.

It is a tribute to her spirit and endurance that she survived her detention despite illness, dreadful privations and a meagre diet. Yet even here, at the worst of times, money helped. She was allowed to purchase soap, towels, toilet paper and vitamin pills.

Nien Cheng tried to make sense of the terrible things people did to her and to others. At one stage she asked herself whether, had she been young and working-class, she would not have behaved exactly as the Red Guards did. She also comments that the attitudes of the beneficiaries of the communist revolution were inevitably different from her own. On the whole, however, she maintains a detachment from those around her based on a firm sense of superiority. Lonely though it left her, it was this which ultimately carried her through.

Her greatest vulnerability was her love for her daughter, Meiping. After years in prison Nien Cheng's winter clothing was reduced to tatters and she asked if she might buy replacements. A bundle subsequently dumped in her cell turned out to contain the only winter clothes her daughter had been allowed to keep, but they were scarcely worn. She could only conclude that her daughter was dead.

Out of prison at last, Nien Cheng started to put her life together again in a society which she notes was severely disfigured by the corruption the Cultural Revolution had been meant to sweep away. When the opportunity arose to leave China, she took it.

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# The Ancient Mariner's wife

Norman Fruman

MOLLY LEFEBURE  
*The Bondage of Love: A life of Mrs Samuel Taylor Coleridge*  
 287pp. Gollancz. £15.95.  
 0575039813

An experienced person has said, "Do not marry a man of genius." ... but one is inclined to say, "Don't be his brother-in-law, or his publisher, or his editor, or anything that is his if you care twopenny - it is probably an excessive valuation - for the opinion of posthumous critics."

Had Leslie Stephen been aware of his own future fate among biographers of Virginia Woolf, he might well have added, "Do not father a daughter of genius." He was here, however, brooding about Samuel Taylor Coleridge, who, throughout the nineteenth century, was pilloried for opium addiction, the waste of his talents, and the desertion of his wife and three children. Among Coleridge's ardent defenders it was an article of faith that he was a man formed for love and the domestic affections, and that all would have been different if only Fate (and the egregious Robert Southey) had not hung the albatross of the utterly commonplace Sara Fricker upon him, and had he married instead Dorothy Wordsworth, or Sara Hutchinson (Wordsworth's sister-in-law and Coleridge's beloved "Asra"), or even Mary Evans, about whom almost nothing is known, except that she was the sister of one of Coleridge's school chums. Regularly invoked also were the imperial privileges of genius, which prompted Stephen to ask with Victorian scorn: "Do they include superiority to the Ten Commandments? Can you expect a poet to confine himself to one wife? May a man neglect his children because he has written the 'Ancient Mariner' and 'Christabel'?"

The received account of the Coleridge courtship and marriage can be summarized thus: The young (twenty-two-year-old), inexperienced, and idealistic Coleridge, newly arrived in Bristol, degreeless from Cambridge, proposes marriage to a woman he scarcely knows, merely because a wife is necessary to participate in the visionary scheme of Pantisocracy, which involves establishing a Utopian community (on the banks of the Susquehanna in Pennsylvania - allegedly chosen for its happy rhythmic potential in poetry). Sara Fricker, the sister of his best friend Southey's wife-to-be, is very pretty and conveniently available. After engaging himself, Coleridge quits Bristol and, after an ominous silence, is next heard from at the Cat and Salvation Inn in London, where second thoughts about Sara prove bleakly unenthusiastic. Southey villainously puts excruciating moral pressure on the mercurial Coleridge who, after much agony, "in compliance to the merest phantom of overstrained Honour" (as he was to write years later), elects to do his "Duty": "I played the fool and cut the throat of my Happiness, my genius, my utility. O Southey! Southey! an unthinking man were you - and are - and will be!"

Molly Lefebure's account, in this powerful first biography of Mrs S.T.C., is very different, and by far the most detailed we have. That Coleridge wished to break his engagement he made murky clear to Sara by failing to write, while eventually writing to Southey that he did not love her. Lefebure shrewdly supposes that Coleridge hoped Southey would "do his dirty work for him", by informing Sara of his feelings; but this Southey refused to do. What is not so well known is that Coleridge had first broken his silence from London with a letter to Southey stating, "I certainly do love her. I think of her incessantly", and when he finally wrote to Sara, "pouring forth the Heart", he did so in a passionate love letter, which he was soon to describe as "the most criminal action of my life ... I had worked myself up to such a pitch, that I scarcely knew I was writing like a hypocrite."

Under Southey's pressure, Coleridge did return to Bristol and the Pantisocrats, but now, Lefebure states flatly, "S.T.C. fell dramatically in love with Sara and a true courtship commenced which was to remain for long after a byword in Bristol for its romantic intensity and unprecedented poetic raptures". Unfortunately, the only documentation given for this crucial assertion is a passage from De Quin-

cey's invaluable but factually treacherous *Reollections*: "a neutral spectator of the parties protested to me, that, if ever in his life he had seen a man under deep fascination, and what he would have called desperately in love, Coleridge, in relation to Miss Fricker, was that man".

Whatever the truth of the matter, there can be little doubt that from the moment of his reunion with Sara, he appeared to be a man in love, and this appears to be writ large in Coleridge's letters, notebooks, and poems of the next five years. Lefebure's narrative of these early years vividly depicts the young couple's

till the very latest period, when my health & spirits rendered me dead to everything. I had a pride in you, & that I never saw you at the top of our Hill, when I returned from a Walk, without a sort of pleasurable Feeling or Sight ... some little akin to the delight in a beautiful Flower joined with the consciousness - "And it is in my garden." Given such contradictory evidence, estimates of what Coleridge may have felt or believed at any given time must remain tentative. He wrote Sara loving letters after bruising battles; there were reunions after what one would suppose irrevocable breaches. In any case, at a distance of almost two cen-

nificance of a tale reported by De Quincey, "Often it would happen", he wrote, "that the walking party [Coleridge, William, and Dorothy] returned drenched with rain; to which case [Dorothy], with a laughing glee, and evidently unconscious of any liberty she was taking ... would run up to Mrs Coleridge's wardrobe, array herself, without leave asked, in Mrs Coleridge's dresses, and make herself merry with her own unceremoniousness and Mrs Coleridge's gravity." "Female readers", writes Lefebure, "will probably agree [that this] was calculated provocation at the hands of Dorothy." So may male readers.

No previous work has given the comprehensive and uncompromising account of Coleridge's attempt in 1806, upon returning from two years in Malta (where he had gone in false hopes of restoring his health), to separate from his wife. Separation "in a totally male oriented society" could deprive a woman "of home, money, children, reputation." "Married women, unless some specific settlement had been made in their favour, enjoyed no property rights [nor did a woman have] any power when it came to her children; they could be removed from her care without her retaining any right of access to them." For a man to "put aside" a wife in this way was rare, and generally done only upon great provocation, usually assumed to be adultery.

Believing all that Coleridge had told them about Sara's violent temper and general unfitness, the Wordsworths encouraged him to demand a separation and agreed to provide a home for him and his two young sons, Hartley and Derwent. The young daughter (also named Sara) would remain with her mother. Coleridge described his understandably frantic wife as using every argument possible to shake his resolve, but "fortunately there was an delicacy and artifice which ... made me see always, and without a possibility of a doubt, that mere selfish desire to have a rank in life ... was at the bottom of all. Her temper, her selfishness, her manifest dislike of me (as far as her nature is capable of a positive feeling) ... and so on and on. Sara's 'manifest dislike of me' reappears in more virulent form in later letters when he writes that he is sure she wishes his death.

For a time Hartley and Derwent lived with Coleridge at the Wordsworths', with occasional, unwilling visits from Sara. In view of the lacerating wounds the separation caused, it is astonishing that when the increasingly strained relations between Coleridge and the Wordsworths snapped in 1810, Sara and the whole Greta Hall ménage should have sided so vehemently with Coleridge. Lefebure's pages on the Coleridge-Wordsworth rupture add much of interest to the already huge commentary on the affair. Because she is rarely inclined to favour the Wordsworths over Coleridge, her conclusion that Wordsworth was not wrong to tell Basil Montagu (with whom Coleridge was to domesticate in London) of Coleridge's severely disruptive personal habits is all the more persuasive.

Early in 1812, when the quarrel was still in full fury, Coleridge came north to Keswick and stayed six weeks, hoping, it has been supposed, that his near presence would make a reconciliation with the Wordsworths easier. But he refused to visit them and they would not go to him. Lefebure realistically infers that the rupture abruptly altered Coleridge's behaviour towards those whose support he might need. He now wrote to his old friend and benefactor Thomas Poole (whom he had neglected for years) that "Love so deep & domesticated with the whole Being, as mine was to you can never cease to be." And to Sara, the icy woman who had destroyed his happiness, genius and utility, he now proposed that she and the children join him in London in a year or so and that they all live together again! On that promising note he left for London, where later in the year he and Wordsworth at last met and were "reconciled".

Presumably, as was generally thought, to resume their former intense friendship (which was never to be). Much is revealed about Sara in the letter she wrote to Poole after hearing the glad tidings:

I think I may venture to say, there will never more be that between them which was in days of yore - but has taught C. one useful Lesson; that even his dearest & most indulgent friends, even those who have been the great means of his self indulgence [un-

emphasis), when he comes to live wholly with them, are as clear-sighted to his failings, & much less delicate in speaking of them, than his Wife, who being the Mother of his children, even if she had not the slightest regard for herself, would naturally feel a reluctance to the exposing of his faults.

Sara's discretion had once evoked from Coleridge a rare, if limited, compliment: "In one thing, my dear Love! I do prefer you to any woman, I ever knew - I have the most unbounded Confidence in your discretion." Regrettably, Sara's discretion led her, after his death, with the encouragement of Southey and Wordsworth, to put a match to "sackfuls and sackfuls" of family letters. "Within the space of a few years", writes Lefebure, "almost all of [S.T.C.'s] correspondence, covering a period of forty years, had been burned. Not only letters from S.T.C. to her, or from her to him, had been destroyed; all intimate letters that had any bearing on the Coleridge, Southey and Wordsworth families ... were sent to the holocaust." In so doing, Sara destroyed much of the record on which a full and true account not only of her marriage, but of her daily life, could be based.

When Coleridge left the Lake Country in 1812, he was never to return. He wrote a few times to Sara, who was hoping soon to join him, and then the letters stopped. It was almost a replay of what had happened so many years before, when they had first become engaged. The crucial difference now was the three children. Hartley, always a worryingly odd child, abnormally small in stature, was now sixteen years old and much in need of a father's guidance. Plans had to be made for his future education. But Coleridge refused to act in any way, thus forcing relatives and friends to arrange for and support Hartley's university studies.

The entire episode of S.T.C.'s total silence upon the issue of Hartley's future, the apparently complete indifference of this man for his wife and children, shook [Sara] profoundly. She confided to Poole, "You will be shocked to hear that I never hear from C. I dare not dwell on the painful consequences of his desertion."

And yet, once again, relations were renewed. In 1815 Coleridge unexpectedly wrote that he wished to tutor Hartley in Greek during the long vacation. S.T.C. was now living with the John Morgan family, had made a heroic effort to moderate his opium dependence, and was working steadily at his *Biographia Literaria* - an astonishing recovery from the depths of the preceding years. Hartley was with his father from mid-June to October 20, 1815, and his "frequent letters" to his mother (many still unpublished) reveal not only that he received the promised tutoring, but he also "enjoyed long discursive conversations with his father". (The matter is of far greater importance than one would suppose, for it has been widely accepted in recent years that the *Biographia* was written under "fierce pressure", which, according to the *Biographia*'s most recent editors, accounts for the work's seemingly chaotic organization and "above all the famous 'plagiarisms'". Lefebure's brief paragraphs on Hartley's visit inadvertently demolish this - to some, comforting - belief.)

Coleridge died in 1834, and Sara in 1845. Not quite two pages are devoted to these last eleven years of Sara's life, a reflection of the extent to which Coleridge dominates the work. Sara lived under the same roof with him for perhaps ten of her seventy-five years. Despite the bonfires she made of letters containing family "secrets", a vast family correspondence remains unpublished. Stephen Potter's *Minnow Among Tritons* (1934; a condescending title, surely) contains only a selection of Sara's letters, to Thomas Poole, though sufficient to reveal her as a perceptive, lively and courageous woman. *The Bondage of Love* could easily have been a much longer book. What was her daily life like during those long stretches when Coleridge was away? What about her relations with her severely neurotic sister, Edith Southey, who died "under circumstances of insanity"? What was it like to be surrounded by geniuses and to bring up extraordinarily gifted children? A totally unexpected side of Sara's complex personality appears in the vaguely surrealistic language she invented in middle age, of which some tantalizing specimens are given from a letter of Southey: "She asks me, how I can be such a Tomnoddyum and a ..."

(though my name, as she knows, is Robert), and calls me a destitute, a maffrum, a goffrum, a chatterpe, a sylleum, and a great mawkin-fort." One wants to know more about this maligned country "minnow" who taught the Greta Hall children French, Italian, writing, arithmetic and needlework.

The last thirty-five pages of this book, beginning with the disgraced Hartley's forced departure from Oxford in 1820 for "sottishness" (a word which devastated his father), are masterfully compressed. Lefebure weaves an acutely poignant and constantly absorbing narrative of Hartley's drunken drifting, the courtship and marriage of the brilliant and beautiful Sara to her scholarly cousin, Henry Nelson Coleridge, the anxiety-provoking but eventually distinguished career of Derwent, and S.T.C.'s almost miraculously lucky anchorage in the home of Dr and Mrs James Gillman, where he slowly metamorphosed into "The Sage of Highgate". In 1829, Sara *mere et fille* removed from Keswick to Hampstead, not far from the great man. Over the last five years of Coleridge's life, the ageing husband and wife met now and then, and, apparently, with much amiability.

Lefebure might have included their final reunion. In 1861, after more than a century in widely separated graves, their remains were removed to a vault beneath the nave of St Michael's Church in Highgate. On Lefebure's reading of their turbulent marriage, they should be pleased to be united for eternity. There will be doubters.

In this badly needed corrective to long held prejudice against Sara Coleridge, Molly Lefebure has drawn more widely upon published and unpublished sources, including Coleridge family memories, than anyone before. Much is brought to light or clarified for the first time. It is good to know that Mrs S.T.C. and Sara Hutchinson became warm friends as early as 1804, and remained so till death, and good to know also that Mrs S.T.C. and the Wordsworths at last came to be fond of each other. Especially satisfying is the belated justice accorded Robert Southey. It is instructive that the collapse of Southey's reputation as a poet was followed so quickly by a general, brutal depreciation of him as a man. The Southey who emerges from these pages is a profoundly decent man whose generosity, loyalty and love for his family were entirely outside the range of the emotionally immature and compulsively self-indulgent genius who was his brother-in-law. "Dear Uncle Southey" became the surrogate father and crucial support of Coleridge's children, as they well knew, and the sheet anchor and unfailing friend of his sister-in-law Sara. In 1815 he wrote to an intimate on the then heated topic of the legality of marriage to a deceased wife's sister: "Has it ever occurred to you ... that this law prohibiting such marriages [is] an abominable relic of ecclesiastical tyranny? I have no hesitation in saying that these are the most natural, the most suitable, and likely to be the most frequent, if the law did not prevent them." Lefebure observes tersely, "This speaks volumes." For a writer inclined to bold speculation, she is oddly reticent here about Sara's feelings for the man under whose roof she lived for thirty years. Southey possessed not only the domestic virtues, but was also strikingly handsome.

Documentation of some key passages is leaner than one would wish. What, for example, is the authority for the statement that Mary Wollstonecraft's revolutionary *Rights of Women* was "enthusiased over by the Panisocrats and their intending brides", or that the Fricker sisters were "dangerously emancipated", or that Wollstonecraft's ideals were put into "enthusiastic practice" in the early years of the Coleridge marriage? Coleridge was to extol Shakespeare for allegedly showing that it was "the perfection of every woman to be characterless", and in a grating letter of 1819, cited by Lefebure, offering advice to a young man on how to choose a bride, he suggested asking: "Does she sincerely adopt my opinions upon all important subjects? Has she at least that known docility of nature which, uniting with true, wisely love, will dispose her to do so?" If in 1795 Coleridge ("at least overtly") entertained decidedly different opinions upon the subject of women, we should like more substantive evidence.

These are minor blemishes in a work rich with fresh information and insights. What is genuinely regrettable is that here, as in her *Coleridge: A bondage of opium* (1974), Lefebure continues to assign to opium a range of devastating moral and psychological consequences that are specifically denied by all the standard works on the subject, such as Terry and Pellon's classic compendium of *The Opium Problem*, which emphasizes "the lack of direct relationship between immorality and chronic drug use", or Goodman and Gilman's *Pharmacological Basis of Therapeutics*. The generalizations Lefebure has drawn from first-hand experience with contemporary drug addicts as to the nature and inevitable consequences of opium addiction - which are popularly held - fly in the face of generations of medical evidence gathered worldwide. Opium does not of itself destroy the moral fibre, enhance or inhibit creativity, provoke extraordinary dreams, or alter the personality. Coleridge's radical abuse of opium was a symptom of his deep-seated psychological disorders - which are abundantly evident at all times in his

life - and not vice versa. If one accepts that, one can make some sense of Coleridge's tragic personal life. If one does not, Coleridge becomes a mere robot directed by the malevolent Demion Opium.

When I visited his Devonshire home in the spring of 1972, the late Alwyne Coleridge spoke to me indignantly about the outrageously prejudiced portrait of Mrs S.T.C. which had become fixed in Coleridge studies. "You would be surprised", he said, "at the number of scholars who have supposed they were pleasing me by praising my great-great-grandfather while blackening my great-great-grandmother." With much feeling he told a number of moving stories about Mrs S.T.C. which I had never seen in print, and he expressed the hope that one day a scholar would do justice by this spirited and courageous woman, who had been so shamefully abused down the years. He would surely have been immensely gratified by this pioneering biography, which is fittingly dedicated to his memory as the "Great great grandson of Mrs Samuel Taylor Coleridge".

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Sara Coleridge in 1809. This miniature portrait by Matilda Belham is reproduced from the book reviewed here.

many hardships and joys in the damp, draughty and mice-infested Devonshire cottage ("an ugly, dilapidated little edifice crouching on the verge of Nether Stowey's main gutter") where, in a stupendous fourteen-month burst of creative genius, almost all of Coleridge's great poems were written.

In 1800 the Coleridges left Nether Stowey for Keswick, in the Lake Country, where they shared a house, Greta Hall, with the growing Southey family. Coleridge insisted on the move, so as to be near the Wordsworths, who were now living in Grasmere. Abruptly, between the autumn and spring of 1800-1, a date which coincides with his growing attachment to Sara Hutchinson, Coleridge's references to his wife in letters and notebooks turned contemptuous; and sometimes savage. She becomes a wretched mother, repellent, suffering from "Coldness ... & paralysis in all tangible ideas & sensations ... all that forms real self ... cold & calm as a deep Frost ... uncommonly cold in her feelings of animal love". This remark runs sharply counter to Lefebure's thesis that underlying all the violent quarrels and reconciliations was a passionately satisfying sex life. "There is a strong possibility", she suggests, "that Sara, to demonstrate her disapproval of her husband's enthusiasm for Miss Hutchinson, had had recourse to the strategy of Lysistrata." But Coleridge may have been telling the truth (as he now perceived it), or simply distorting reality, as he regularly did when relationships turned sour. In 1808, having vilified Sara for years, he wrote to a friend that "the sight of that Woman would destroy me", but just twelve days later he wrote to her that he had "never known any woman for whom I had an equal personal fondness - that

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# Behind the lines

## Lorna Sage

"The press has lately teemed with works treating the condition, the destiny, the duties of women . . .": so muscled Anna Jameson (who later wrote on *Legends of the Madonna* herself) in 1846. It has been true again for the last ten years, and publishers are scrambling to consolidate the market — perhaps with a vague collective anxiety that women may once more fall out of favour. Indeed, the Berg Women's Series, the Viking/Penguin Lives of Modern Women, and the Virago Pioneers have a curiously old-fashioned look about them. It's not only that they deal (by definition) with nineteenth-century women and twentieth-century women of earlier generations, but that they are designed to take up the space in an expansive Victorian way.

The Berg and Penguin series, by looking at "lives", seem perhaps anachronistic in another way too. Potted and purposive biographies of "achievers" loom behind them: Samuel Smiles's *Self Help*, even Carlyle's *Heroes*, designed to instruct — an effect compounded by obligations of sisterhood, and the hagiographic impulse that is often detectable. These are the lives of *personages*, and they conform disturbingly to the stereotypes of their genre: the struggle against Father; against adversity (or against prosperity); then the mentors, the Muses, the minders and so on. Gertrude Bell (by Susan Goodman, Berg) is perhaps the purest example; on her first visit to the Middle East in 1902 she wrote, "I am much entertained to find that I am a person in this country", and she registered the decline of her importance and influence, after her work with Military Intelligence during the First World War and at the Paris and Cairo peace conferences, in the same terms when she returned to Baghdad in 1925: "Light of our eyes", they said . . . as they kissed my hands . . . it goes a little to the head you know — I almost begin to think I were a Person."

The format does not allow Goodman room to speculate about whether Gertrude Bell's death was suicide (no longer enough of a person); or about the full reasons for the failure of her influence back home. Instead it encourages an embarrassingly girlish stress on what she did achieve in the early days. To begin with, Bell found Arabic impossibly difficult, but "Gertrude soon began Arabic lessons and in later life was a renowned Arab linguist with a remarkable ear for the subtleties of dialect!" It's the exclamation mark that is the give-away and signals a tone that is all too frequent in these books: Freya Stark's pertinacity (Caroline Moorehead, Penguin/Viking) is similarly difficult to take — though here Moorehead suffers from a rather different problem in that, since her subject is still alive, she's clearly inhibited — and not only in reporting negative reactions. It's just as difficult, it turns out, to convey someone's charm while they are still alive without sounding absurd; as a result Dame Freya's career becomes more, rather than less, mysterious.

## AUTHOR, AUTHOR

Competition No 291. Readers are invited to identify the sources of the three quotations which follow and to send us the answers so that they reach this office not later than September 12. A prize of £20 is offered for the first correct set of answers opened on that date, or falling that the most nearly correct — in which case inspired guesswork will also be taken into consideration. Entries, marked "Author, Author 291", on the envelope, should be addressed to the Editor, *The Times Literary Supplement*, Priory House, St John's Lane, London EC1M 4BX. The solution and results will appear on September 19.

1 "I have been considering a great while what should be the fittest gift for me to bestow upon my godchild, and I have resolved at last. . . . 'I prithee what?' says he. — 'I think, Ben, I'll o'en give him a dozen good Latin spoons, and thou shalt translate them."

2 Stale smoky air hung in the study with the smell of drab battered leather of his chairs. As on the first day he bargained with his hero: As it was in the beginning, is now. On the sideboard the tray of Stuart coins, base treasure of a bog; and ever shall be. And sang in their spoonspoon of purple plush, faded, the twelve apostles having preached to all the gentiles: world without end.

3 I lived there as a boy and know the goal

The Penguin/Viking series, in fact, reveals a whole array of tensions, embarrassments and difficulties. These are thrown into relief by the recent publication of three new volumes. The first four titles which came out last year — *Rebecca West* by Fay Weldon, *Carole Angier* on *Jean Rhys*, *Bessie Smith* by Elaine Feinstein, and *Freya Stark* by Caroline Moorehead — fairly obviously try for a "balance" between the two kinds of female personage: the Dames and the famous wrecks. They all, however, depend on some kind of identification between writer and public, and make a point of women writing on women. Thus Weldon takes a fighting, irreverent line on Dame Rebecca ("but then, whoever said writers should be nice"), and chooses to dramatize her dilemma by casting her book as a set of admonitory letters to a young Rebecca who had just (in 1914) borne H. G. Wells's illegitimate son, Angier on Jean Rhys ("her life was unbearably sad: only her art was triumphant") extrapolates the wretchedness of the life cautiously from the fiction. Feinstein on Bessie Smith sums up the moral of the series: "We remember her on her own terms. We accept her as we learn to accept ourselves." The mood is — the format demands it — celebratory. And though these Lives differ from Victorian Lives the tone is one of plucky acceptance of the vagaries of the great:

There was nothing to distract her from her old ways of having a good time. These included visiting the notorious "buffet flats" in Detroit, which put on various kinds of erotic shows, with exhibitions of male homosexuality and amazing sexual turns involving Coca Cola bottles and lighted cigarettes. And of course she drank heavily . . .

Obviously though, this recipe didn't work. The next batch of Lives of Modern Women have taken a step back from their subjects, and from sisterhood. They are written for the most part by men and have a more careful and "solid" air: *Hannah Arendt* by Derwent May, *Colette* by Alan Massie and *Madame Sun Yat-sen* by Jung Chang (with Jon Halliday). The "balance" (between the notorious and the worthy) has been, in a sense, observed; but one question looms larger than before: what have these Lives to do with each other; and indeed with the earlier four? Apparently very little, except, that is, for the fascination of the Personage, which seems stronger than ever; as does the *Girl's Book of Heroines* atmosphere. "She was in every way a self-made woman . . . she created for herself the character and myth of Colette, and lived them," writes Alan Massie:

It was her achievement, in a society dominated by men and male values, to insist on her independence as a woman, to claim freedom, while remaining feminine; to assert her equality without ever imitating or denying men.

So *that's* how you do it! The self-made effect is enhanced, since the format doesn't allow for enough historical context to make any other kind of sense of the notion of "achievement". This is even more pressingly true of Madame Sun Yat-sen (Ching-ling). What is one to make of this account of her marriage to the founding father of modern China?

Glittering in its shed, late-afternoon  
Lambency informing the deal table,  
The ceiling cradled in a radiant spoon.  
I must be lying low in a room there,  
A strange child with a taste for verse,  
While my hard-nosed companions dream of war  
On parched veldt and fields of pain-swept gorge . . .

Competition No 287.  
Winner: John Press  
Answers:  
1 This was a marriage and a baptism,  
A holding of breath, nearly a drowning,  
Wings spread wide for balance where he trod,  
For feathers full of water and her neck  
Under the water like a bar of light.  
Michael Longley, "Swan's Mating".

2 A sudden blow; the great wings beating still  
Above the staggering girl, her thighs caressed  
By the dark webs, her nape caught in his hair.  
Under the water like a bar of light.  
W. B. Yeats, "Leda and the Swan".

3 Love, that had robbed us of immortal things,  
This little moment mercifully gave,  
Where I have seen across the twilight wave  
The swan sail with her young beneath her wings.  
George Meredith, *Modern Love* XLVII.

For the Chinese it is not only honourable but also admirable for a girl to worship the hero of a great cause and to want to marry him.  
However, Sun was already married, with three children. This had been an arranged marriage.  
Mrs Sun was an outsider to Sun's cause, and did not share in his work . . . Sun had two alternatives. One was to take Ching-ling as a concubine. The other was to dismiss his wife . . . Clearly both were impossible. So what happened is that Sun and his wife created a sort of precedent in Chinese marriage practice by coming to an amicable arrangement for a permanent separation . . .

Either this is the old, old story ("ha bleeding ha" as Fay Weldon would say, indeed does say, apropos the plight of Mrs H. G. Wells) or one needs to understand a lot more about China, to say the least.

And this is the trouble: the Series picture of the world is an incoherent one, part fairy-tale, full of easy mythologies. Only the books that concentrate on women's work, oddly enough, are plausible about their lives. The test case here is Emily Dickinson, who had no life at all to speak of and hence was mythologized as an old maid and a witch, and who for that very reason can now emerge (Helen McNeil, Virago; Donna Dickinson, Berg) as all achievement, identical with her writing, the ideal sister who only exists on the page. McNeil and Dickinson disagree about how to interpret her lack of publication in her lifetime — for Dickinson it is a tragedy; for McNeil a paradoxical (and topical) triumph, since it allowed her to dispense with the necessity of writing in an acceptable nineteenth-century "feminine" fashion. It allowed her not to be a Personage, in short.

This Emily Dickinson is, perhaps, rather too available as a focus for contemporary aspirations: none the less she fulfils the role a good deal better than the other "greats". What

## AMONG THIS WEEK'S CONTRIBUTORS

Derek Beales is Professor of Modern History at the University of Cambridge.

W. G. Beasley was formerly Professor of the History of the Far East at the University of London and Head of the Bangor Research Centre at the School of Oriental and African Studies. He is the author of *The Meiji Restoration*, 1972.

Alan Booth has lived in Japan for many years. His *The Roads to Sata* was published earlier this year.

Keith Brown is Professor of English at the University of Oslo.

Philip Conable's *Chardin* was published earlier this year.

Neil Coreoran is a lecturer in English at the University of Sheffield. He has recently completed a study of Senatus Henay.

Della Davin teaches Chinese economic history at the University of York. She is joint editor of *China's One Child Family Policy*, 1985, and is at present engaged, with W. J. F. Jones, in the preparation of *Chinese Lives* by Zhang Xinxin and Sang Ye, a collection of contemporary oral histories.

Tim Dooley's first collection of poems, *The Interrupted Dream: Poems 1971-1984*, was published in 1985.

Francis Duchêne was Director of the International Institute of Strategic Studies from 1969 to 1974 and of the European Research Centre at the University of Sussex from 1974 to 1982.

John Dunn is a Fellow of King's College, Cambridge. His books include *Political Obligation in Its Historical Context*, 1980, and *Rethinking Modern Political Theory*, 1985.

J. A. Ferguson is a Research Fellow at St Edmund Hall, Oxford. He is currently writing a book on nineteenth-century French representation of Africa and the Caribbean.

Norman Fruman is Professor of English at the University of Minnesota. His books include *Coleridge: The damaged archangel*, 1972.

Ernest Gellner is Professor of Social Anthropology at the University of Cambridge. His most recent books are *Relativism and the Social Sciences* and *The Psychoanalytic Movement*, which were published last year. He is also the author of *Nations and Nationalism*, 1983.

Alastair Hamilton is Professor of the History of Ideas at the University of Leiden. His books include *The Family of Love*, 1981, and *William Bedwell the Arabist 1563-1632*, which was published last year.

Anna Laura Lepachy is Reader in Italian at University College London. She is the author of *Narrative e Tema fra due secoli: Verga, Invergnito, Svevo, Pirandello*, 1984.

Martin Levine's *Age Discrimination and the Mandatory Retirement Controversy* will be published shortly.

Lachlan Mackinnon's poems are included in *Chaos New Poets*, published next month.

Adam Mars-Jones is the editor of *Mae West Is Dead: Recent lesbian and gay fiction*, 1983.

Jonathan Mirsky is China Specialist of the Observer.

Charles Moore is Editor of the *Speculator*.

Idris Parry's collection of essays *Hand to Mouth* was published in 1981.

B. S. Pullan is Professor of Modern History at the University of Manchester. He is the author of *The Jews of Europe and the Inquisition in Venice, 1550-1670*, 1983.

Stephen Roper's first collection of poems, *Idols*, will be published this autumn.

Lorna Sage is a lecturer in English and American Studies at the University of East Anglia.

Allen Staley teaches Art History at Columbia University. He is the author, with Helmut von Erffa, of *The Paintings of Benjamin West*, which will be reviewed in the TLS shortly.

Michael Tanner is a lecturer in Philosophy at the University of Cambridge.

John Turner is a lecturer in History at Royal Holloway and Bedford New College, London. He is editor of *Businessmen and Politics*, 1984.

David Walker is Principal Inspector of Historic Buildings, Scotland, and the co-author of *The Architecture of Glasgow*, 1968.

Ann Warner is a Fellow of St Antony's College, Oxford. She has recently completed a translation of (Nagasaki) Takahashi's novel about village life in late Meiji Japan, *Tsich*.

Ruben Weber is Joan Paley's Professor of Modern European History at the University of California at Los Angeles. His *Peasants into Frenchmen: The Modernization of Rural France* was published in 1977.

Jeanelle Winterman's most recent novel, *Bodily for Beginners*, was published last year.

Christopher White is a lecturer in Music at Goldsmiths College, London.

Helen McNeil's book underlines the yawning gap in sophistication between our current theories of "writing" and of biography. All three series (forthcoming titles from Virago include *Queen Victoria*, *Sappho* and *Eva Perón*) are mostly about claiming more status for women; but so far they're doing it (mostly) by the simple expedient of filling up the shelves.

Susan Goodman: *Gertrude Bell*. 122pp. Leamington Spa: Berg. Paperback, £3.95, 0 907582 68 0. Caroline Moorehead: *Freya Stark*. 144pp. Viking Penguin. Viking £7.95 (Penguin paperback, £2.95), 0 670 80675 7.

Fay Weldon: *Rebecca West*. 107pp. Viking/Penguin. Viking £7.95 (Penguin paperback, £2.95), 0 670 80627 7.

Carole Angier: *Jean Rhys*. 125pp. Viking/Penguin. Viking £7.95 (Penguin paperback, £2.95), 0 670 80636 9.

Elaine Feinstein: *Bessie Smith*. 105pp. Viking/Penguin. Viking £7.95 (Penguin paperback, £2.75), 0 670 80642 0.

Derwent May: *Hannah Arendt*. 139pp. Penguin. £2.95, 0 14 008116 X.

Allan Massie: *Colette*. 152pp. Penguin. £2.75, 0 14 008160 7.

Jung Chang with Jon Halliday: *Mme Sun Yat-sen*. 144pp. Penguin. £2.95, 0 14 008455 X.

Helen McNeil: *Emily Dickinson*. 208pp. Virago. Paperback, £3.50, 0 86068 619 1.

Donna Dickinson: *Emily Dickinson*. 132pp. Leamington Spa: Berg. Paperback, £3.95, 0 907582 69 9.

Also available in these series are:

Renee Winegarten: *Mme De Staël*. 133pp. Leamington Spa: Berg. Paperback, £3.95, 0 907582 74 5.

Judith Okely: *Simone de Beauvoir*. 174pp. Virago. Paperback, £3.50, 0 86068 324 9.

Amanda Hopkinson: *Julia Margaret Cameron*. 180pp. Virago. Paperback, £3.95, 0 86068 726 0.

Sara Maitland: *Vesta Tilley*. 148pp. Virago. Paperback, £3.50, 0 86068 795 3.

# Letters

## Cultural Property

Sir, — Dr Richard Pankhurst (Letters, August 15) is uncharacteristically unfair in his comparison of the brutal Fascist invasion of Ethiopia in 1935-6 with the British expedition of 1867-8. The former was an unprovoked attack, followed by a permanent colonial occupation (brought to an end, incidentally, by British and Ethiopian forces in 1941), while the latter was a mission to rescue unjustly imprisoned British and other nationals, followed by immediate withdrawal from the country. And, as Richard Pankhurst correctly states, under the terms of the Peace Treaty with Italy, Ethiopia did not demand the return of any works of art, etc. taken from the country prior to Mussolini's invasion.

Pankhurst wrote a similar letter to *The Times* (October 21, 1981) in which he referred to the "purchase" of articles. His use of the word "looted" now is highly emotive. He then spoke of 350 Ethiopian manuscripts in the British Library; now he refers to 500 "fine manuscripts", the additional 150 presumably being those brought back by individual members of the Napier expedition in 1868. Many of these have notes stating the original purchase price in Ethiopia, and most of them (other than those in the BL) cannot possibly be described as "fine". Incidentally — as I pointed out in my rejoinder in *The Times* (October 23, 1981) to his earlier letter — "few scholars have used the 350 Ethiopian manuscripts in the British Library as judiciously and assiduously as Dr Pankhurst". Neither Dr Pankhurst nor the Ethiopian and Western scholars, who have worked on these collections in Europe, could have contributed so significantly to the elucidation of Ethiopian history, had these manuscripts remained *in situ* where physical and political access would have been wellnigh impossible (particularly in present conditions).

And let me assure Dr Pankhurst and others that none of the MSS in this country is unrepresented in the libraries, churches and monasteries of Ethiopia. This fact has become abundantly clear in recent years with the microfilming and splendid cataloguing, by an American organization, of Ethiopian MSS (3,500 so far) in those churches and monasteries.

I offer no comment on the general question as to whether and in what circumstances treasures of this nature should be restored to their original habitat. No doubt there are good reasons for doing so in some or many cases. I feel, however, quite sure that Richard Pankhurst himself will, on reflection, agree that any comparison of the Napier expedition with Mussolini's invasion of Ethiopia is unjust and unfortunate. Nor is it fair to use the term "looted" in this particular case: the political, ethical and emotional climate of the 1980s cannot be likened to that of the 1860s.

Professor Browning's references to the Ethiopian objects (July 25) seem to me eminently reasonable. Perhaps I may be allowed to add a tailpiece to his statement that, at Queen Victoria's request, the British Museum returned to Ethiopia the *Glory of the Kings* which the Magdala campaign had brought to Britain. Emperor Yohannes had written to Queen Victoria and to Earl Granville, the Foreign Secretary, requesting the return of the MS. His letter, in the English translation, was said to include the phrase "for in my country my people will not obey my orders without it". The Amharic original shows, however, that there is no phrase in the text which corresponds with that "translation". It must remain a matter of speculation whether the Queen would have urged the Trustees of the British Museum to comply with the Emperor's request, had it been known that the English translation did not accurately reflect the text of the Imperial missive.

EDWARD ULLENDORFF.  
4 Bladon Close, Oxford.

The Poetry Society welcomes entries for the 1987 European Poetry Translation Prize, which is awarded biennially to a translator of a collection of poetry from any European language into English and published during 1985 or 1986. The judges this year are Peter Porter and A. Alvarez. The 1983 award went to Tony Harrison for his version of *The Oresteia*; the 1985 prize was given to Michael Hamburger for his translation of Peter Huchel.

mean what I think, then what do they mean? And why do readers of poetry get so rattled whenever it is suggested that not all poets are content to remain benignly muddled in matters of religion?

Since Caddel quotes from *The Spoils*, I will give him three lines from that poem:

Prayers in hand cities and brigade men  
lest there be more wars than one:  
but God is the dividing sword.

What does Caddel make of that? I shall explain what I make of it in a forthcoming issue of the *Journal of the United Reformed Church Historical Society*.

DONALD DAVIE.  
Omega Cottage, 4 High Street, Silverton, nr Exeter, Devon.

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## COMMENTARY

## Mechanical pastoral

Christopher Wintle

HARRISON BIRTWISTLE  
Yan Tan Tethera  
Queen Elizabeth Hall

Melanie Klein had no trouble in offering a confident explanation for the young boy's anxieties in Ravel's *L'Enfant et les sortilèges*: but what would she have made of Harrison Birtwistle's curious but impressive *Yan Tan Tethera*? This one-act opera culminates in the dissolution of a young shepherd's (unconscious) apprehensions of paternity through his wife's incantation of an old charm he has taught her ("Yan Tan Tethera, 1-2-3, Sweet Trinity Keep Us and our sheep") – though only after the shepherd has passed seven years in incarceration, through the wiles of "the Bad 'Un", in an ancient burial mound in the company of his new-born twin sons. The work's powerfully projected antinomies of life and death, prayer and sorcery are reinforced by various other oppositions: of the corrupt South (where the opera is set) and the pure North (the home for which the shepherd yearns); of the shepherd and his dark *alter ego* (another shepherd who pillages graves, melts the church bell and courts the first shepherd's wife); and of two flocks of sheep (sung by one set of singers), the fretful Wiltshires and the fertile Cheviots. (The differences are also characterized by two sets of masks; one white-faced, one black.) In performance, the effect of the work is of a unity; yet it is still sufficiently puzzling as to demand some special effort of interpretation from its audience.

Part of the opera's undoubted fascination lies in the skill with which Tony Harrison has tailored his libretto to Birtwistle's needs. In fact, all of the composer's librettists have served him well, though none as elegantly and concisely as this. Birtwistle's long-standing (and Ravel-like) preoccupation with clocks, toys, mechanisms and folklore is reflected in Harrison's description of *Yan Tan Tethera* as a "Mechanical Pastoral". The stylized, artificial elements include some of the scenic specifications (only partly reflected in this staging), the pervasive chanting of the shepherd's traditional counting system (from which the work derives its title), a number of reiterated, strongly characterized stage gestures (for example, the shepherd spins round with the var-

ious appearances and disappearances of the Bad 'Un as a piper), and even the use of a thirteen-syllable line for the chorus of thirteen Wiltshires. Yet offsetting this are a number of beautiful set-pieces of different length, notably the pregnant wife's touching aria in which she upbraids the shepherd for his seeming indifference ("You'd wait all night with your eyes while they lamb / but about your own babies you don't give a damn"). To all this, Birtwistle has responded with one of his most cogent and taut scores, where the contrasts work together more purposefully than hitherto, where the references to different musical genres are much clearer and where there is a satisfying interaction between the static, repetitive features and the slowly unfolding narrative.

In this production the textual complexity of the score is often sensed more than perceived, since the orchestra (a fluent London Sinfonietta under Elgar Howarth) is placed at the back of the stage, behind a semi-opaque white gauze. The distance between the singers, who move around on an apron that extends well into the auditorium, and the players not only draws attention to the frequent interchange of vocal and instrumental musical material, but also throws the vocal lines into relief. This is particularly the case with Omar Ebrahim, the unkempt, bronzed, young shepherd whose singing with a bald, tart Yorkshire accent is one of the triumphs of the evening. Richard Stuart, as the other more cunning shepherd, provides him with an effective foil; and both Helen Charnock and Philip Dohan as the wife and the piper respectively are well cast, though Dohan's dance testifies to the difficulties of expressing simple pleasure on the stage, even when the pleasure is the Bad 'Un's. The sheep sing their taxing parts with remarkable assurance, and for the most part stand, squat or process around the peripheries of the action in a manner that recalls the staging of the last act of Birtwistle's recent *Mosk of Orpheus* by the same producer David Freeman (it is also unexpectedly redolent of Birtwistle's earlier pastoral, *Down by the Greenwood Side*). When they crawl into the centre of the stage to participate in the main events, their partly improvised movements reveal the benefits of the company's field trips to a sheep farm (only their impromptu bleatings lack confidence). Indeed, the standard of performance in general is very high and it is good to know that the production will be recorded for television.

## Caliphs and kings

Hugh Macdonald

CARL MARIA VON WEBER  
Oberon  
Usher Hall, Edinburgh

Scottish audiences were ready for anything from Weber's *Oberon* after seeing Graham Vick's reinterpretation of Anthony Burgess's rewriting of Planché's pantomime libretto staged by Scottish Opera last autumn. Frank Dunlop's conversion of the Usher Hall, of all places, for a new production of *Oberon* as an illustration of the Edinburgh Festival's Enlightenment theme promised to play yet more theatrical football with this uniquely problematic opera, but in the event approached the spirit of the original more nearly than many dared hope. It may be difficult to take Planché seriously as drama, yet the olio of fantasy, sentiment and boisterous entertainment must be realized within a romantic framework. Carl Toms's designs provided a circle of gilded steps and platforms around the orchestra and vividly colourful costumes and props. Dunlop used these to the full, with much running up and down the steps (for lack of other space) and generous romantic gestures from fairies, brigands, pirates, caliphs and kings alike. The production freely but delicately made fun of itself, involving the orchestra and conductor from time to time. The chorus, alas, remained out of the action, illuminated behind the raised set.

As entertainment it succeeded in just the way Planché intended, and his wayward plot was given every chance of being followed by those who cared to try. It was witty and farcical, with the silliest mermaids you ever did see, and the magic horn sparked merrily in the pit. The wicked orientals came near to provoking a hiss from the audience. The fairies were a shade less than elfin, but they had all those steps to contend with. The difficulty is that Weber was a quite different kind of artist, with a different conception of romantic opera.

Under Seiji Ozawa the cornucopian musical treasures of the piece could not have been in safer hands; his command of every nuance in the score and his awareness of every sound and movement around him are complete. His tempi were leisurely, never hurried, and his care for detail intense. The Junge Deutsche Philharmonie responded eagerly and the sing-

ing of the Edinburgh Festival Chorus was equally alert. Vocal honours went to Elizabeth Connell's exuberant and golden-voiced Reina with Philip Langridge a sturdy presence as Oberon. The King of the Fairies has relatively little to sing after his opening aria "Feld vowl", which he delivered with great dramatic intensity, a page that could have been taken from *Der Freischütz*. Benjamin Luxon, doing his Papageno act as Sherramin, was abetted by La Verne Williams ready to get just as much comic mileage out of the Fatima role. Only Paul Frey, contending with the mighty role of the task; he has heroic notes and heroic tone, but too few heroic phrases, and the shape of too many of his numbers became blurred. James Robertson was the assured Puck.

It is hard to see *Oberon* ever finding its place in any normal operatic repertoire. To stage it with the full panoply of scenic miracles that London taste demanded in 1826, augmented by technological sleight of hand, would cost so frail a plant. Serious interpretations such as *Die Zauberflöte* can more or less successfully bear without overwhelm Planché's story. Yet Weber's music cries out for earnest listening, being his most advanced and imaginative score, at least in terms of colour and atmosphere. A staged concert performance resolves the dilemma by giving proper prominence to the orchestra, centrally placed on the stage, and preserving spectacle and comedy in a reasonable measure. Indeed *Die Zauberflöte* would have much to gain from such a presentation. Although scarcely enlightening about the Enlightenment, the Festival's festive *Oberon* turned out to be what the blurb claimed: a unique event not to be missed.

Tony Harrison's libretto for Harrison Birtwistle's opera *Yan Tan Tethera* is included in *Tony Harrison, Theatre Works 1973-1985* which will be published in paperback on September 25 (448pp. King Penguin. £4.95. 14 00826 1). The volume, which also contains the texts of *The Misanthrope*, *Phaedra Britannica*, *Bow Down*, *The Bartered Bride*, *The Orestes*, *The Big H* and *Medea*, a *Sea-We Opera*, was first published by Bloodaxe as *Dramatic Verse 1973-1985* and was reviewed in the TLS of June 6, 1986. The text of *The Mysterium*, which were performed at the National Theatre over a period from 1977-1985, is also available (229pp. Faber. £9.95. 571 13789 X).

a whole, he refers to him as "the Cossacks' 'Ataman'". This can only be intended to convey the impression that Krasnov was in command of all or part of the Cossacks in Austria. This in fact he was not, the rank being a purely honorary one dating from 1918, when he had been Ataman of the Don Cossacks.

Again, Knight attempts to refute the point that Keightley's insistence on handing the Cossacks over to the Soviets, instead of fulfilling Alexander's plan for their peaceful evacuation to the rear, involved considerable potential risk to the lives of British troops. He writes: "The argument that the hand-overs involved a 'severe risk' to British soldiers is an interesting one, which might carry more weight if Tolstoy had thought it worth making in his book." Those who read the book rather than Knight's representations of its contents will find on pages 219-20 a detailed discussion of this point, in the course of which I emphasize that "Brigadier Mussini's order of the day on the eve of the operation clearly envisaged it as one which could easily get out of hand, putting the lives of British soldiers seriously at risk."

I restrict myself to one further example, which also treats of a consideration of significance: "screening, unlike the handovers, Tolstoy asserts, 'represented a perfectly straightforward operation'. This is puzzling." Knight might find it less so were he to read pages 244-5, among others, where I discuss this question also. Among other important considerations (including the expressed views of senior officers serving in 5th Corps at the time), I point out:

Above all, nothing would have been easier than to have screened the Cossack officers once they had

been separated from their followers and held at a wired camp at Spittal. In fact the deception was which brought them there itself represented an effective screening ploy... screening designed not to protect them from repatriation, but to guarantee their delivery to the Soviets.

This still seems to me a valid consideration. I will make no attempt to unravel M. C. Wheeler's convoluted attempt (Letters, August 8) to vindicate the purely academic nature of the colloquium and his friend Knight attended in Yugoslavia. I note his point that my presence would have been unwelcome. Perhaps I should be thankful that, unlike Vera Beloff, I did not also receive an equivalent postcard from the British participants mocking my inability to attend.

Both Dr Wheeler and Mr Knight deflect criticism of their participation in an event whose purpose was clearly to bolster a bankrupt and oppressive totalitarian regime by appearing to suggest that I am a Nazi sympathizer. As Knight dramatically reveals "Last year Tolstoy's German publishers recently advertised a translation of his *Victims of Yalta* in the neo-Nazi magazine *Report*." I have to confess that this is the first I ever heard of this sinister event. However, I must point out (as Mr Knight will learn if he ever comes to write a book) that authors have nothing to do with marketing their products, nor do they have any means of interfering should they wish to do so. For my part, I should be very glad to have any means of neo-Nazis were to read my book and learn from it something of their predecessors' crimes.

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## The art of Enlightenment

David Walker

Painting in Scotland: The Golden Age  
Talbot Rice Art Centre, Edinburgh, until August 31

Set in the Valhalla of the Scottish Enlightenment, Playfair's library at the Old College, itself the supreme architectural embodiment of the age's preoccupation with light, *Painting in Scotland: The Golden Age* is, with 207 exhibits, by far the largest exposition of eighteenth and early nineteenth-century Scottish art since 1939. Backed up by the well-produced catalogue (206pp. Phaidon. £19.95, paperback £12.95. 0 7148 2455 0), in which the exhibition's organizer Duncan Macmillan relates Scottish painting to the philosophical and scientific background of the Enlightenment, it builds on thirty years of Scottish exhibitions, great and small, to present a comprehensive review with the aim of redressing some long-standing imbalances of public appreciation. That such imbalances exist is not surprising. If we take even the three painters who were unquestionably great in a British rather than a Scottish context, we find that Ramsay has not been the subject of a book since 1952, Raeburn since 1925 and Wilkie – other than catalogues – since 1843.

Scotland came late into the mainstream of European art. Sir John Medina (d1710), with whom the exhibition opens, was a respectable painter of the Kneller school but he was a Fleming and not a Scot. The native Richard Walt (d1732) whose "Still Life with Cauliflowers and a Leg of Lamb" (1724) is worthy of comparison with contemporary Dutch painters is revealed by "The Piper of Grant" at the Scottish National Portrait Gallery to have otherwise been still at the level of clan icons. John Smibert (1688-1751), represented by a brutally frank portrait of the elder Allan Ramsay, and William Aikman (1682-1731), a protégé of the Clerks of Penicuik who were to dominate the patronage of art and architecture throughout the century, set the pattern of the century by studying in Italy, possibly because the Jacobite Court was there. Both Smibert and Aikman had to seek their fortune in London; the first emigrated with Bishop Berkeley and became the founder of American painting; the latter remained to secure the patronage of Queen Caroline and (unpaid) of Lord Burlington. He was esteemed, as reported by Vertue, "the best painter this country has produced of late years", a report which, if Hogarth is left out of account, is borne out by "Lady Grisel Bailie" and "Sir Hew Dalrymple" (1722) whose commanding presence and finely studied hands show a concern for artistic quality beyond commercial formal portraiture.

Aikman established a Scottish dominance in English portraiture which was to recur in the 1740s. Allan Ramsay (1713-84), the son of the poet, made his way to the studio of Francesco Solimena at Naples in 1737, and on his return to London he answered the challenge of Reynolds by breaking his career to study at the French Academy in Rome with Watteau's friend Vleughels between 1754 and 1757, returning again, virtually a French painter, to secure immediate royal patronage. The wake of the Reynolds exhibition earlier this year is thus a propitious time to study Ramsay. It is now over thirty years since Ellis Waterhouse told us Ramsay was a worthy rival, and although Nicholas Penny in his Reynolds catalogue assessed the fine balance between them as Reynolds having more "range and force" whereas Ramsay was "more careful as a draughtsman, more interested in the description of expensive fabric" and "more delicate in his handling and more subtle in colour". Ramsay does not enjoy the same fame. He should. The reflected light in "Ann Bayne" (1740) was new in British painting, as was the deeply shadowed countenance of the ermine-clad "3rd Duke of Argyll" (1749), as eloquent an image of his mysterious and unforgiving nature as could be conceived. In the cool easy monumentality of "Sir Hew Dalrymple" (1754) and in his post-French Academy "Margaret Lindsay, Ann Brown" and "Martha, Countess of Elgin" (the powerful drawing and

deeply shadowed red-ground modelling of Solimena gives way to thinner pastel-toned painting in which the solidity of the head is slightly softened into the background. Comparing these with Reynolds's portraits of, say, "Lady Caroline Fox" or even "Mrs Abington" will bear out Dr Macmillan's claim that Ramsay's best paintings of the 1750s and 1760s are among the supreme achievements of British Art.

Ramsay's nearest contemporary, Gavin Hamilton (1723-98) – whose countenance is well recorded by one of the exhibition's two fine pastels by Archibald Skirving – had a simi-

curious matter of principle he did not paint.

David Allan (1744-96) was less ambitious than the Runcimans, more content with the limitations of what he could achieve. He is represented mainly by drawings, which show how his Pier Leoni Ghezzi-derived style of draughtsmanship, (as seen in the series of sepia drawings of the Roman Carnival), became domiciled in Scotland in the coloured etchings of *The Gentle Shepherd*. Allan's draughtsmanship is not unlike that of his contemporary English caricaturists. It is not hard to see why his facile mastery of character and expression caught the attention of Burns and of a public



"Sir John and Lady Clerk of Penicuik", 1792, by Sir Henry Raeburn, from the exhibition reviewed here.

lar training with Agostino Masucci, the painter of the Jacobite Court. Being well off and with no need of patronage, Hamilton returned to Rome to spend his life with Anton Mengs and the neo-classical theorist J. J. Winckelmann, who held that "the only way for us to become great... is through the imitation of the Ancients... the expression of all Greek statues reveals even in the midst of passions a great and grave soul". Hamilton accordingly painted Homeric subjects with figures related to the picture plane, as in an antique sculptured relief, and classical rhetoric rather than direct observation of expression. Earlier Lord Shaftesbury had recommended "figures as big as the common life", so Hamilton produced canvases as epic in scale as in subject, thirteen feet by nine. Here these are represented only by Cunego's engravings, a small version of "Priam pleading with Achilles" (1775) and the finer and more luminous sketch of 1759 for "Andromache mourning the Death of Hector". We will be able to gauge the full impact of Hamilton's work in the full-scale "Agrippina" when the exhibition comes to the Tate in October, but one is left with the impression of a painter who was more than just historically important as the forerunner of J. L. David. David's "Oath of the Horatii" is obviously a far stronger design and a finer painting than anything Hamilton could ever have produced, but the gulf between Hamilton's pictures and David's "Death of Socrates" is perhaps narrower than most historians would be willing to allow.

Alexander Runciman (1736-85), sent to Rome by the Clerks of Penicuik to bring Hamilton's epic style home and ultimately naturalize Homer as James Macpherson's Ossian, was not in the same league either as a draughtsman after the antique or as a painter. But his version of "Agrippina" (1780), set against her towering galley and open sea, is a more dramatic composition than Hamilton's and one cannot fail to be moved by the intense creative excitement of his drawings of the early 1770s, such as "Ossian Singing" and "Fingal and Conban Cargla", or by the few works by his short-lived brother John (1744-68), such as the highly imaginative "King Lear in a Storm" (1767) and the thoughtfully shadowed self-portrait. Another tantalizing glimpse of unfulfilled greatness is seen in the startlingly boldly shadowed and stylized drawings of John Brown (1749-87), the inspiration of Henry Fuseli: as a

"The exhibition's large section on "The Landscape Painters" traces the ancestry of Scottish

landscape painting from the decorative artist James Norrie (1684-1757) – represented by a classical landscape with an equestrian figure, donkeys and sheep, all of a quality not always matched by his successors – through the work of Alexander and John Runciman to his three major figures, Jacob More (1740-93), Alexander Nasmyth (1758-1840) and John Thomson of Duddingston (1778-1840). More's Clyde waterfall pictures of the 1770s – which had a nationalist as well as a picturesque content – parallel the work of Richard Wilson in their keenly observed painting of foliage, water and geological structure. That he should have departed for Italy to paint the classical-world "aerial perspectives and pearly tints of other masters" (here represented by "Morning" and "Evening", excellent from afar but wooden close at hand and perhaps décor rather than easel pictures) is to be regretted. Nasmyth, a pupil of Ramsay, in Rome from 1782 to 1785, returned to apply his study of Claude to the depiction of Scottish estates, here best represented in "Castle Huntly" and "Inveraray" (both c1800), the latter reflected in "Loch Pyne"; he excelled in the depiction of calm water, as we may see also in his later "Shipping at Leith", (1824) and must have devoted much careful observation to cloud, as his skies are often the best features of his pictures. But the landscapes shown here have a certain sameness (the "Stirling Castle" at the Edinburgh gallery of the Fine Art Society shows that he was not always so stereotyped) and his panoramic views of Edinburgh fall far short of painters such as Bellotto. Although his work lacked the golden glow of Nasmyth's pictures, John Knox (1778-1845) in his single exhibit, the majestic "Trongate, Glasgow" (c1826), is shown to have been a much better painter of architecture. His more scientific approach to the geological structure of land can be seen in the pair of near-German Romantic mountain landscapes of Loch Lomond, currently on view at the Fine Art Society. More adventurous than either More or Knox, and more significant for the future of Scottish painting, was John Thomson who, through Sir Walter Scott, had the good fortune to know Turner and was, with his rich free impasto, altogether bolder and more romantic in his studies of sea and cliff. David Roberts (1796-1864) is only fleetingly represented, as is H. W. "Grecian" Williams (1773-1829), who shows fine botanical study in the foreground in his watercolour "The Ancient Temple of Corinth".

The final sections, "Scenes of Scottish Life and Character" and "Artists and Evangelicals", show how Scottish art came fully of age in its central figure Sir David Wilkie (1745-1841). It is in part a rerun for the benefit of the Tate of last year's *Tribute to Wilkie* exhibition. But Macmillan does expand our appreciation of Wilkie with his exposition of the relationship between the artist and sitters in the early (1804) "Chalmers-Bethune Family". It is good to see the finished sketch for "Blind Man's Buff" (1811) and Wilkie's major early study of facial expression "Rent Day" (1807). Some paintings, like Sir William Allan's "Knox Admonishing Queen Mary" (1822) may be of historical interest for their subject-matter alone but there are many other delights and surprises among the secondary artists around Wilkie. A few stand out such as Thomas Bonnar with his luminous triple portrait sketch of "The Daughters of Thomas Chalmers", the deaf-mute Walter Cleikie (1795-1837) with his skilful and engaging genre drawings, and Alexander Carse (died c1836) familiar from "The Tribute" but here represented also by the "Arrival of the Country Relations" (1812), which is curiously parallel to the German and Danish domestic interiors he is unlikely to have seen. The exhibition closes on a surprising note, the further extension of science to picture-making of the early calotypes or "sun-pictures" of the painter D. O. Hill (1802-70) and Robert Adamson who had learned the art of photography in order to provide portrait studies for Hill's epic picture of "The Disruption of the Church of Scotland". This feat of portraiture should have been the climax of the exhibition but, immovable like Hamilton's major canvases, it has remained stuck in the Free Church College on the Mound.

## Letters

a parallel sample from the Melbourne Manuscript can do little to advance the case for their identity.

As with the hand, so with the text. The fragment contains a dialogue between Prince Alexander and Lorenzo: other courtiers, among them Alphonso, leave the stage before it. It alternates between verse for the Prince and prose for Lorenzo. Shirley's scene is played out between Duke Frederico (speech prefix, *pace* Shapiro, "Dil.", not "Prince") and Lorenzo, in the presence of three courtiers. One of them, Alonso, is antagonistic to Lorenzo; another, Depazzi, is his fellow conspirator; both comment on the dialogue between the principal figures. The scene is in verse throughout. In the Melbourne Manuscript, Lorenzo engages in a double bluff, admitting to treason but claiming to be a double agent with Alexander's best interests at heart. Shirley's Lorenzo simply, and at length, asserts his innocence and wins credence by his posture of injured merit. Custruccio, Salvato and Consales are alluded to in the fragment. In *The Traitor* they are mentioned in similar contexts, but the latter two are called Salvati and Consales respectively. Even the closest verbal parallel shows several divergences of detail. *Melbourne MS*: "Consales y' Grand Captain, putt in fleidmnds reckoning a million of Crowngs giuen to spies"; *The Traitor*: "... the grand / Capitaine Gonzales accounted to King Ferdinand, / Three hundred thousand crowns, for spies, ...". All in all, some dozen lines of the 143 in the fragment show real resemblance of word or sense to lines in the equivalent, shorter, passage in Shirley's scene. If this is an author's revision of his first draft, it

is indeed radical.

Much, then, as I should like to accept Mr Shapiro's attractive conjecture, I cannot share his confidence that the evidence points unequivocally towards it.

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## 'The Minister and the Massacres'

Sir, – I suspect your readers may be beginning to tire of the extensive space you have generously accorded Robert Knight and myself in your correspondence columns, particularly as the exchange appears to be degenerating into a somewhat esoteric exchange of personalities.

It is probably time to sign off for the moment, particularly as in my case I shall be reviewing Mr Knight's criticisms in full elsewhere, and by incorporating any valid suggestions in the paperback edition of *The Minister and the Massacres*. Finally, I am daily expecting receipt of an important microfilmed archive, as yet unconsulted by any historian, which may throw entirely new light on the problem.

For the moment, perhaps I may be permitted to note the extent to which Knight's argument appears so often to rely on play of words or *suppression veri*. A few examples from his latest letter (August 1) will suffice to demonstrate the point.

Seeking to attribute General Krasnov's more personal bizarre views to the Cossacks as



# Edwardian admirations

Allen Staley

STANLEY OLSON  
John Singer Sargent: His portrait  
309pp. Macmillan. £16.95.  
0333 291670

John Singer Sargent: His portrait is a lively and provocative book, of a sort that art historians do not write. (Not surprisingly, there are a few of the silly mistakes that seem inevitably to slip in when non-specialist writers plunge into the annals of the history of art — an example from page 147 is the "Brabazon school", apparently inspired by Sargent's friend Hercules Brabazon Brabazon, whose devotees preceded Impressionism.) It is consistently entertaining, as well as informative, an eminently readable biography of one of the most conspicuous figures in English and American art from the 1880s until the 1920s. None the less, if readable, it is a frustrating book to read. Sargent is of interest to us — and of great interest — for one reason alone: his achievement as an artist, and Stanley Olson keeps that fact firmly to the fore. Although he announces in his *avant-propos* that a forthcoming *catalogue raisonné* allows him to concentrate entirely on the life, that life was given structure and purpose by the art. Therefore, and quite properly, the author tells us about the paintings, not only describing them and placing them in a biographical context, but also trying to make sense of them in art-historical terms and to assess critically Sargent's successes and failures. His and our problem is that the book has only a handful of dingy illustrations, and a large proportion of those — photographs of the artist, his family, friends, houses where he lived — are there for strictly biographical reasons rather than to show the work. Thus to see what Olson is talking about and to make sense of what he says, the reader must turn to art-historical monographs, and even with those books at hand we soon realize what a small part of Sargent's huge output has yet been properly published.

Sargent once told a would-be biographer: "as to biographical details, there are none of the least interest to the public". He seems to have been right. In Stanley Olson's words:

In the full library of Sargent literature the harshest accusation anyone dared to record was that there might not be more to him than met the eye. Of course people ruminated about his sex life, but quickly gave it up as a vacant topic. Very little gossip circulated about him. Everyone knew he painted, but no one was willing to believe that was all. But it was.

Following the account of the artist's death, we are given a one-sentence paragraph: "It was the end of a happy life." Like John Marcher in Henry James's "The Beast in the Jungle", Sargent takes on abnormal dimensions from the absence of any *frisson* of scandals, skeletons in closets, or secret life, that we have come to expect as standard fare in biographies of Victorian and Edwardian worthies, and Olson refrains from venturing on to psychological terrain to dispel the image of untroubled progress through a happy life.

Yet Sargent's upbringing by hypochondriac, peripatetic and permanently expatriate American parents, wandering perpetually between Pau, Florence and Nice, was sufficiently eccentric to account for any *bizarrie*, real or imagined, on the part of the mature man. Its most obvious consequence was an incredibly strong mesh of family ties which were to dominate Sargent's life until his death in 1925. His affection for and sense of duty towards his mother (who died in 1906) and his two sisters (who both outlived him) evidently left him no need or desire for closeness to anyone else, or for that matter — continuing the rootless pattern of his boyhood — for ties to any place, or to anything, other than his work. He was cosmopolitan, cultivated, intensely social ("He never ate a meal alone") and utterly detached. Those same adjectives can be used to describe the paintings as well as the man, and since he was also immensely skilled, his success as the pre-eminent fashionable portrait painter of the Edwardian era — "le Van Dyke de l'époque" — appears to have fallen to him almost inevitably.

Sargent was also the product of training, of friendships, of the shared interests and attitudes of his time, and of artistic traditions. Although it is a biographer's task to discern what is unique about the man, from another

perspective we can see how much the artist belonged to and was the product of the period in which he lived. If Sargent moved from Paris to London in part because of the scandal caused by his *décolleté* portrait of Mme Gautreau in the Salon of 1884, and in part because of the pushing and pulling of Henry James, he crossed the Channel on a crowded boat and settled in England at precisely the moment that English artists trained in France were establishing the New English Art Club, to challenge the hegemony of what they believed to be a moribund native school of painting. If he struggled with the challenge of painting out of doors at Broadway and Fladbury, his contemporaries were doing the same at Newlyn and Cokburnspath, Grez-sur-Loing (where he in fact had painted in 1875) and Concarneau, Pont-Aven and Arles. His "disastrous turning" in 1890 by accepting a commission to paint murals for the Boston Public Library, "in the idiotic belief that he was embarking on the creation of his *magnum opus*", came at a time when advanced artists everywhere were taking parallel turns. The one artist everybody admired in 1890 was Puvis de Chavannes, who was also enlisted to paint murals in the Boston library.

The murals remain the least understood and least loved component of Sargent's oeuvre.

## Outside and inside the Salon

Philip Conisbee

CHARLES S. MOFFETT  
The New Painting: Impressionism 1874-1886  
509pp. Oxford: Phaidon. £38.  
07148 24305

As with all the radical young painters in the nineteenth century, whose novel artistic ideals brought them together as a group, whether loosely or closely, the better to promote their art and to withstand the pressures of the dominant artistic ideology of academic conformity in its various forms — one thinks of the Primitifs in David's studio, the Nazarenes in Rome in 1809, the Pre-Raphaelites in London in 1848 — an initial cohesion of the Impressionists (Independents or Intransigents, as they were more readily known at the time) was quickly diffused. In the heroic early days of the "style", there was indeed a close identity between the work of Monet, Pissarro and Sisley in the early 1870s, or Pissarro and Cézanne at Pontoise and Auvers; Manet, with his more Baudelairean urbanity, was associated with this manner at least in his pioneering employment of a broad, loose handling, and so was Renoir, for all his more sunny and porcelain vision; and Degas was always relentlessly explorative and innovative in his technique. In terms of the works, the only unifying feature of these disparate painters can be identified loosely as their "naturalism" (to encompass the full range of their subject-matter), and a little more tightly as their commitment to the contemporary scene, the painting of "modern life" — that being the modern life of the urban (above all Parisian) and suburban dweller at work and at play. This sets them apart from the earlier primitivizing groups mentioned above. No community of artists, however, even with the closest group identity, can hope to resist (if this even be their intention) the inexorable pressures of their individual lives and circumstances, or to control those social, economic and cultural forces, whose unique and specific intersection is manifested in the work of art.

*The New Painting* is the catalogue of the exhibition shown in Washington and San Francisco earlier this year, originated and co-ordinated by Charles S. Moffett, Curator of Paintings at the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco. Every exhibited work is reproduced in colour, and many comparative works which were not actually present in the exhibition at either venue are reproduced either in colour or black-and-white. Apart from its obvious value as a catalogue, the book is essential for any student of Impressionism. In some respects it is a companion to John Rewald's still fundamental *History of Impressionism* (1946; 4th revised edition, 1973), and provides in more detail a host

of information on the eight Impressionist exhibitions which were held between 1874 and 1886. There are individual sections devoted to these exhibitions, each with an introductory essay by an American specialist in the subject; the original exhibition catalogues are reproduced photographically, with notes on the present locations of works (when known) or other appropriate references. Among the exhibitors are several whose reputations have survived less well than the major names we now most readily associate with the group, so it is useful to have brought into focus artists such as Cals, Raffaelli or Zandomenighi. This year's exhibition brought together as many of the originally exhibited works as it was possible to identify and permissible to borrow, and these are catalogued here with entries which simply consist of the comments of critics at the time: commentaries which were almost as often positive as negative about the works of art themselves — indeed by selective quotation one could almost present the history of Impressionism as a history of critical acceptance. But not quite.

The Impressionists did, although in varying degrees, adopt a somewhat oppositional stance in relation to the "official" art of the Salon, and this resistance to governmental structures gave them a subversive and "Intransigent" image. By 1880, those who continued to exhibit together were calling themselves "Un groupe d'artistes indépendants", but this significance can be read either in a collective or in an individualistic sense. Their stance meant a degree of isolation from the "patron class" and already by 1880 a key figure such as Monet was writing: "I must do something tamer, more bourgeois. I am going to play for high stakes, without even counting in the fact that the group calls me a turncoat..."; and Renoir had already returned to the Salon in 1878 for the financial advantages it offered and the much larger audience it attracted. Inevitably, rather than gaining in cumulative power, the exhibitions became diffuse and less focused, not only because leading artists of the group defected, but also because individual careers, ideals and styles developed independently.

Richard Schiff, in the densest and most provocative of the essays ("The End of Impressionism"), moves away from Rewald's type of documentary approach to develop the theme of his own recent book (*Cézanne and the End of Impressionism*, 1984), arguing convincingly for a continuity between some of the aesthetic ideals of Impressionism, notably the synthetic and subjectivist tendencies, and those of so-called Post-Impressionism. Already contemporary critics, such as Diego Martelli in 1879, were questioning the Impressionists' apparent naturalistic and analytical approach to nature. Fromentin's open air, diffused light, and real sunlight — in favour of a broader definition of

spectored portraits of the later Victorian period, but only enough of them to allow him to paint high-minded allegories that nobody wanted. Moreover, as a portraitist, Sargent continued a French realist aesthetic that belonged essentially to the middle years of the nineteenth century, and by the time of his greatest success in the genre, between 1890 and 1905, he could see as plainly as his critics the limitations of such an art. In 1914 he wrote, "Ingres, Raphael and El Greco these are now my admirations, these are what I like". His three series of paintings in Boston were art-historically conceived, reflecting his genuine knowledge of earlier art, in a self-conscious bid to transcend time and elevate their creator to the level of the great artists of the past. Ironically, painted largely after 1900, they partake of their period as much as the portraits do of theirs, and the last of them, the stairway panels in the Museum of Fine Arts, from 1921-5, have an art-deco stylishness which, if not exactly belonging to mainstream modern art, should make them at long last accessible to a generation energized by revisionist curiosity and post-modern sensibilities. When we have given these works which have little in common with our received notions about Sargent's art, their due, we may be equipped to discern the full dimensions of the artist, and the man.

"each artist painting in his own manner". Martelli preferred to call them Independents, signifying freedom from officialdom and the Salon, wherein lay the main "political" aspect of their position. In another interesting and thoughtful essay, Paul Tucker sets the first exhibition of 1874 against the traumatic recent background of the Franco-Prussian War and the Commune, and the subsequent official attempts to encourage an art that would provide some sort of patriotic moral lead and bring France a much-needed sense of regeneration, when national morale was low and the mood one of defeat. At the time, Ernest Chesneau was perceptive enough to notice "elements of renewal and progress" in Impressionist painting. But few others would perceive this in a Renoir vision of a pretty girl in a theatre box, a day at the races with Degas, or the "fine artist's feeling" (Castagnary) of Berthe Morisot's "Hide and Seek", at a time when Chevassier, Directeur des Beaux-Arts, was organizing religious and nationalistic frescoes for the Palace of the Legion of Honour and the Pantheon. From a certain point of view, Impressionism happened at the wrong time and place.

The exhibition and its book are a tribute to John Rewald, who is one of the dedicated, and who rigorously upholds the value of his essentially empirical approach. Rewald's empiricism, of course, was put at the service of his passionate commitment to the Impressionists as the advance guard of modernism, in face of the entrenched attitudes of a moribund official, academic art. Confirming this standpoint, the book reprints two brilliant and seminal essays published in 1876: one by Mallarmé, "The Impressionists and Edouard Manet" (originally published in English), the other by the critic Duranty, "La nouvelle peinture". It is not without irony that the continuing public success of the safest of all modernisms, gracing the walls of millionaire and national galleries, is fostered by a lingering affection for the last Romantic notion of the artist misunderstood and in opposition to the *status quo*, whose art we flatter ourselves still to champion, yet somehow keeping it "new". The Salon artists are now the *méconnos* and *maudits*, and in the end it is a bolder policy to champion their art.

Some of the more exploratory essays, notably those by Tucker and Schiff, do illustrate contemporary Salon art by the way of contrast with the Impressionists. But this needs to be taken further, and not just to make Impressionist works shine with an even brighter light. It would be good to see an institution with the high profile of the National Gallery of Art in Washington take on the "official" art of the later nineteenth century, both to confirm the historical issues involved and to extend our aesthetic understanding, if indeed these issues are not one and the same.

## Bringing Shakespeare to book

Keith Brown

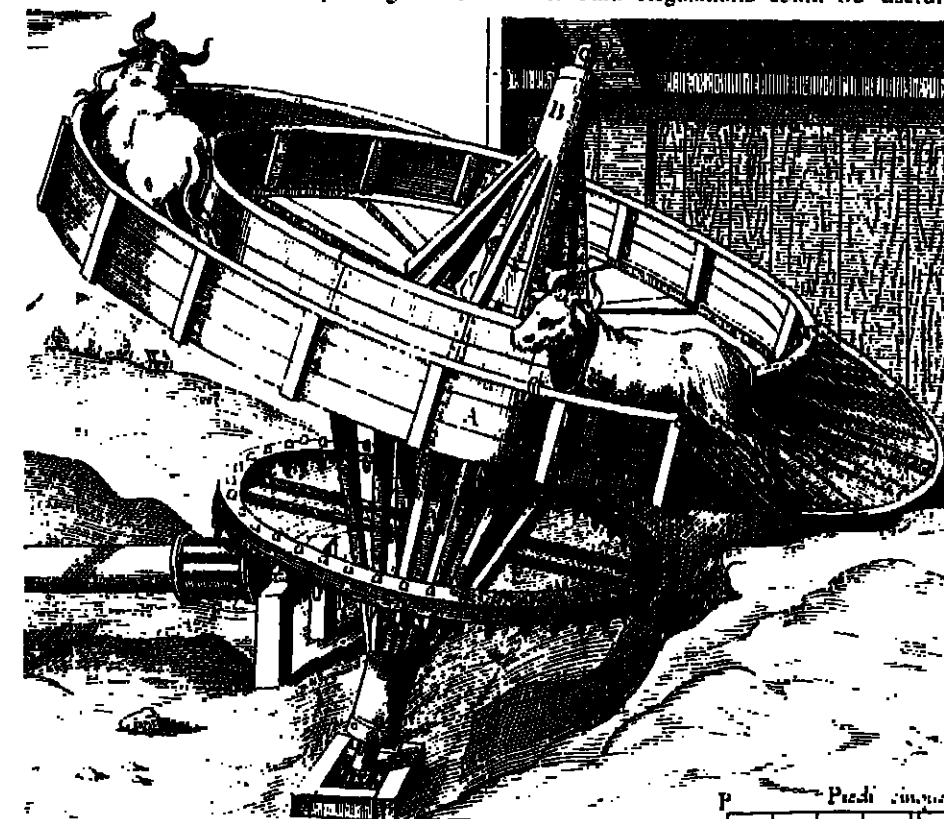
Last April, fifteen new book-length contributions to Shakespeare studies were reviewed in the TLS in a round-up by Professor Inga-Stinn Ewbank. Since then, not without enjoyment, the present reviewer has read twenty more — and now autumn will soon be upon us, with yet another harvest. *Cui bono?* Certainly individual authors, trampling each other under in the press, do not benefit. Nor does "English" as an academic subject, convicted of mere mandarism, to many hostile eyes, by this bardolatrous profusion. Even Shakespeare scholarship itself is harmed, as the inflation devalues its intellectual currency. Libraries, too, are posed impossible problems.

Reading modern academic Shakespeare scholarship in bulk enforces two reflections: that (outside straight textual scholarship) there has been a marked decline in the status of the scholarly article; and that Shakespeareans are rather a glib lot. In a way these two impressions merely represent different sides of the same historical coin. While modern Eng Lit was taking shape, good critical articles had the double function of a good tutorial: not only illuminating the particular text under discussion, but teaching by example a whole new mode, demanding but exciting, of apprehending literature. Once this was assimilated, a certain urgency was necessarily lost to the scholarly-critical essay. By the mid-1950s, a feeling of institutionalization was already perceptible.

Shakespeare studies, which have contributed so much to the evolution of modern critical ideas, perforce followed a similar path. No one reading academic Shakespeare studies today is likely to be unaware of the rich texture of major Shakespearean drama: complexity quietly playing three-dimensional chess with itself. Forty or fifty years ago this was far less widely understood; and critics needing to communicate their new awareness then really had no choice but to adopt a rather talky critical style. What else could they do, but work through a kind of mental re-staging of their chosen plays; noting how detail after detail "organically" interlocked, reverberated, or sparked new lines of implicit commentary upon the action? But today it becomes a little hard not to rebel, when carted off on yet another descriptive tour of a familiar play — which turns out to be pretty much as we have always thought it — just to learn something that, however new, could as well by now have been presented in a few paragraphs or pages. Yet in chapter after chapter of book after book one is subjected to some approximation of this approved technique of retelling; without it, one is sometimes forced to ask, would there be a book here at all? And in variant form the same question recurs when we find some specific new insight first admirably used, in quite concrete fashion, to elucidate some particular play — and then wrenched into merely metaphorical applicability to several more plays. Could not publishers' consultants impose a moratorium on books of this type? The gap they fill is much needed for breathing-space; while such a squeeze would force an intenser intellectual vitality back into periodicals, which (though the current *Shakespeare*

Survey number on the Histories is a cut above average) now too often tend to serve as combined filing-cabinet and oblique.

Although critical anthologies firmly focused on some currently live topic may still do well enough — the solid volume *The Woman's Part: Feminist criticism of Shakespeare*, for example, found its place in any teaching library — the cult of The Book is by now devaluing even collections of articles between hard covers, that traditional way of giving extra status to a good essay. Though article-references still pack the footnotes, book-length Shakespeare studies show increasing reluctance to engage fully with any previous work that was not itself presented in that form: thus pushing future



A detail of one of Vittorio Zucchi's designs for machinery (in this case a mill to be turned by oxen on a treadmill). It is reproduced from a facsimile edition of Zucchi's *Nova teatro di macchine ed edifici*, edited by Carlo Poni (1949p. Milan: Polifilo. L120,000). The book was first printed in Padua in 1607, five years after Zucchi's premature death. Little is known of Zucchi, though Giuseppe Lazara wrote in 1650 that he had been "a painter, a teacher of mathematics, an sculptor and the city foreman". His perspectives were not in themselves adequate guides for construction. Referring to a "machine for grinding powder", he writes, "This device is very beautiful and easy, and so simple that even a mediocre master will be able to construct it"; on an "edifice for raising and drying water" he comments, "It is not possible to show in a single view, all of the instrument's effects, nor all of its parts, but it will suffice for the experts (huomini intendenti) to understand all of its parts and operations".

authors into seeking book-format even when some more economical form of publication might have served. In the brave days when a main contribution to *Shakespeare Survey* was still a shot heard round the Shakespearean world, for example, would Alan C. Dessen's exploration of the neglected moral plays written and performed during Shakespeare's youth have been presented quite as here? The necessary leisureliness of analytical technique did not in the past keep into everything.

In many ways, Dessen's quiet book is one of the better in this collection. He is surely right to argue that we have been undervaluing one strand in the dramatic traditions of late sixteenth-century England, and that this has a demonstrable relevance (which he studiously avoids overplaying) to Shakespeare's work: it also corrects and complements facile notions of Shakespeare's relationship to the older Moral

ity Play tradition. Thus described, all this sounds like small change; yet, as Dessen almost apologetically explores it, one's ability to "read" the open organization of Shakespearean drama is genuinely enhanced. Better still, this is the kind of book that continues in silent dialogue with subsequent reading: the simplistic nature of Harry Morris's effort in *Last Things in Shakespeare* to "ground" Shakespeare "inescapably" on the Age of Faith, for example, is particularly shown up. And yet... all this could have been done in a third the length, given a change of convention in the pleasant paled park of modern Shakespeare studies.

The Park Regulations could be usefully

humbling reminder of this: a parish priest's distillation of years of reflection upon *The Winter's Tale*, completed only two days before his death. His clear, cleanly written monograph, not in the least churchy, has some fine clarificatory observations; but is still perhaps best commended to those studying literature within a context of Christian belief — outside which his analogies with *The Cocktail Party*, for instance, may not work quite as he intended. The wider world of reasonably educated people, with some curiosity about Shakespeare but no training in Eng Lit, is also, presumably, the market at which Germaine Greer's small book is sighted. Savage attempts to destroy her chances in that market have been made by certain reviewers, in a style of bullying contempt that begs for refutation. But alas her book is scattered with occasional mis-statements and ill-judged formulations; she has, one feels, been let down by her General Editor. None the less, in the three months I have had a copy, it has several times been picked up by just the sort of people for whom it was intended, and in each case has hooked them: random dips quickly turning into settled reading. These are people for whom, sad as it may seem to scholars, it cannot conceivably ever matter that Dr Greer wrongly supposes, for example, that the "Wooden O" only had short summer seasons. What does matter to them, for it increases not only their enjoyment of the plays but their ability to think more clearly about that enjoyment, is to understand why it makes sense to include Shakespeare in a series on English "thinkers", despite — almost indeed because of — the fact that there is hardly a topic on which we are really sure of his opinions. Greer does this job, for this audience, rather well: her Shakespeare would not have been wholly bewildered by "Oxford" linguistic philosophy. Let us hope her book survives into a revised second edition.

Though edited by an academic, *Players of Shakespeare* also comes from, and speaks to, a more than merely academic world. Twelve Royal Shakespeare Company actors report their experience of working on a role for the company: collectively, under Philip Brockbank's tactful editorship, they offer a book which makes splendid recreational reading, while at the same time providing a brilliant insight into the business of acting, an important record for theatre historians, and a great deal of food for further thought about Shakespeare. A book certain to breed imitations: flee from the froth to come.

The books remaining fall roughly into two groups: those contented with the present state of affairs in the Shakespeare Park, and the discontented.

Let the malcontents — the first a very mild one — come first. Though one respects the motives of pety behind it, *Shakespeare Study Today*, edited by Georgianna Ziegler, is a classic instance of one kind of traditional academic publication with which it has perhaps now become irresponsible to harass overstretched book-buyers. It is a rather miscellaneous collection of lectures, given to celebrate the fiftieth

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Translated with an Introduction, Notes and Commentary by Mark Musa

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It was natural to begin by questioning the habits of the Shakespeare Park because it is the academics who are responsible for most of the current congestion. But of course Shakespeare is neither unknown nor unloved in the world beyond the palings. Richard Pilgrim's elegant slip paperback, *You Precious Wonders All*, is a



anniversary of the Furness Memorial Library, and assembled under this faintly catchpenny heading. None disgraced their occasion, but surely the more valuable of them – a review for laymen by Fredson Bowers of the modern state of his art, Stephen Urkowitz beginning to play Lear-like games with *Hamlet* – would have been of more use if made available in journals? Only the paper by Jean E. Howard undertakes directly the kind of future-conscious stock-taking the title leads one to expect. She pleads for academic Shakespeareans to overcome their streak of panicky conservatism, and allow the insights of the new critical theorists some place in their ways of thinking. But inevitably that is already happening; and would happen faster were it not for the blustering tone of some publicists of the new ideas.

What, after all, is this would-be grand critical battle all about? In its own day, the coming of "close reading" made a far more revolutionary break with the then ruling critical tradition, than does the neo-scholastic excitement about a handful of epistemological truisms that seems to constitute the greater part of today's ferment. Even so, New Criticism soon contented itself joined hands with the historical/biographical approach it had seemed to supplant. The fact is that well-written critical work reflecting awareness of recent literary-theoretical preoccupations, if concerned with Shakespeare (who as usual seems mostly to have anticipated the new insights anyway), could be read by persons unaware of the new theoretical flurry without it ever occurring to them that they were up against some sort of critical New School. A case in point is Philip C. McGuire's engaging 150-page exploration of Shakespeare's use of "open" silences: two-thirds of which could indeed be read with pleasure by anyone at any level who has ever responded to any of the plays. In the English-speaking world structuralism tends in practice to be quite compatible with New Criticism, and deconstruction with Empson, though carrying the debate further. What does not help to do this, is the over-wordy style, as if clumsily translated from some central European language, that many proudly adopt as a badge of critical progressiveness. Too often, they then either drown in their own proceduralism, and say nothing at all; or else make a normal critical observation in an abnormally difficult way: there are specimens of both in *Shakespeare and the Question of Theory*, together with more interesting essays, including some that seem completely conventional: Terry Eagleton, hailing the book on its back cover as a definitive break with the pieties of "humanist" criticism (good to see *humanist* nailed as a word of shame), is mistaken. It is a useful showcase, although despite Patricia Parker's introductory survey, and a tidy division into four sections – "Language, rhetoric, deconstruction", "The Woman's Part", "Politics, economics, history", "The Question of *Hamlet*" – it still seemed difficult to bring this variegated collection into any clear focus.

Eagleton's own volume, a contribution to his Rereading Literature series, is equally difficult to bring into focus, if for other reasons. To half of his world, he is a brilliantly original thinker; one hears of queues and waiting-lists for this volume in university bookshops. To the other half he is that familiar figure, the ex-Catholic, trying to become Pope of his own religion. Reviewing thus becomes impossible: whatever one says is interpreted by both parties as evidence of adherence to one of these factions, and his book gives both parties grounds for their opinions. If you have been content with that close-analytical tradition of Shakespeare criticism which consists of producing endless brilliant paradoxes and ironies out of the texts, but wish this tradition to be continued in a more stylish modern dress, Eagleton is your man. The minority of us who begin to find that technique as wearing as the mechanical logic-chopping humour of Shakespeare's undergraduate contemporaries can scarcely complain. Better, if you want a critic whose interest in ideas has helped him develop a gift for spotting and following-through latent strategies in Shakespeare's plays, Eagleton is again your man. What is unattractive is mostly the feeling that the artist has been loftily summoned to the service of the critic, and the unwearied piety – of which Eagleton should surely be the last to complain in others.

When, for example, someone seeking to

"sum up Shakespeare" in a hundred small pages can still find space to tell us that "Like Macbeth, the bourgeoisie will become entangled in its own excess, giving birth to its own gravedigger (the working class), dissolving away that obstacle to historical development which is itself, and dying of its own too much", then he loses the reader's confidence twice over. In the first place, he shows that his whole mind is not on his alleged object; and in the second, a man who can believe that, after the history of the past seventy years, will surely believe anything. Similarly, though we see what is meant when on page one we learn that Shakespeare is "deeply embarrassed" by the clash between his political ideology and an epistemology implicit for him in the very act of writing, we see, also, that the essential point here could have been put in half-a-dozen ways, of which the one chosen is going to offer the greatest opportunities for condescension. (Which duly follows: "marriage . . . a solution to sexual and political dilemmas so ludicrously implausible that even Shakespeare himself seems to have had difficulty in believing it".) All a great pity, in a work which otherwise shows very well how present-day theoretical interests can have practical critical applications.

Terence Hawkes works deliberately to entertain, as his original plan to call his book "Eminent Shakespeareans" confirms: the aspiration to Lytton Strachey's satirical stance showing on every page. Sometimes, though, he gets it beautifully right: his convincing demonstration that Dover Wilson's intense preoccupation with *Hamlet* was, of all things, a surrogate response to a fear of Bolshevism is particularly well done. Unfortunately he has misread the professional snigger too, as when without any very noticeable connection with the subject of the chapter in which it appears, he drags in the fall of the Elizabethan Maid of Honour breathlessly rogered into pregnancy by "Swiss-Swatter" (sweet Sir Walter Raleigh): "a perfect instance of how, under the pressure of 'making', any language proves capable of disintegration". He went all the way to Stratford, or was it Tokyo or Siena, to say that.

The eminent Shakespeareans dealt with in this sequence of revised guest-lectures are Shakespeare himself, A. C. Bradley, Professor Sir Walter Raleigh and Dover Wilson. The aim is to clear a way for a cultural revolution in English studies in Britain, which will cease trying to confront the young with "great" works of literature. (The quotation marks are

Hawkes's own) that can actually claim no intrinsic existence-in-themselves, and emphasize, instead, the way those works were generated and subsequently "processed" as part of a continuous struggle for national cultural meaning. (No provision in this programme for trying also to show how it might be that Shakespeare, even in translation, can still move and fascinate readers and audiences the world over, even in countries culturally and politically hostile to Britain, where his greatness has to make its own way relatively unaided.) What Hawkes is advocating is the near-total abandonment of English-literature teaching. For how long, does he think, would the young continue to be interested in his tales of the hyping of works that now turn out never to have had any objective or intrinsic value? Why not study the history of dress fashions instead?

Asides suggest, however, that these are indoor fireworks, their detonations rather meant to startle the family, than to break the parlour windows: the theoretical subjectivism of Hawkes's assertions about the nature of literature is indeed so extreme and so unqualified as to be in practice meaningless. So it is safe to enjoy the performance, which is never less than what is called spirited, and at times genuinely helpful in showing how to restate, and sometimes clarify, old problems with new concepts.

Chapter One strikes twice, trying to make us all feel guilty about the damage the Shakespeare trade has done to Stratford-upon-Avon (which is minimal), and obscurely guiltier still about William Salt Brasington, the villain of *The Dillan* (the recently published memoir of Stratford working-class life at the beginning of this century). Brasington was an early official of the Stratford Memorial Theatre, writer on Picturesque Warwickshire, and a rent-squeezing cottage landlord. To Hawkes (a keen Welsh salmon-fisherman) this of course suggests Shakespeare: another Stratford burgher-capitalist who poeticized a bit and was interested in plays. So he may have also found the faces of the poor like Brasington, or if he didn't he must have thought about it – which gives a quite new slant on Caliban and the *Tempest*. . . . and thus are poor bars demythologized. For demythologizing critics – in this case Bradley – the technique is a little different. You link his excessive interest in Ophelia to his guessed-at homosexuality, you heavily emphasize the less successful side of his criticism, and you demonstrate (well and interestingly) the limitations of the equipment

with which he had to struggle with what we now know to be the central issues of textualizing. What you do not do (any more than you later give credit to Dover Wilson for the merits of his work) is show any recognition of the intellectual achievement represented by Bradley's formulation of his theory of Shakespearean tragedy: though over thirty years ago this was the only part of Bradley's book my own teachers seriously bothered us with. But Hawkes does not want the past to have been too intelligent, and repeatedly underestimates others' notions in order that he may bring his own the more excitingly to the rescue. Thus Raleigh and Dover Wilson interest him only for the openness with which they and others encouraged the growth of English literary studies – not least of Shakespeare – for Establishment political reasons: to foster social cohesion, national self-awareness and cultural imperialism. And so they did; but in a diffuse way we have always known it (see, for instance, the account of Septimus's education in *Mrs Dalloway*), and what we know we correct our compasses for.

The air of somewhat dramatic revelation with which Hawkes explains (or is it explains away?) the rise of "English" as fostered by an alliance between a frightened Little-Englandism and Anglo-Saxon imperialism – "a child of Empire's decline by America out of Russia" – thus rather misses fire. His explanation also seems a bit parochial. The rise of European nationalism, after all, fostered the local study of all the European literatures, with even nation finding its hero author. If Hawkes had looked a little at some of these parallel movements, *That Shakespearean Rag* would have benefited. As it is, it raises important issues in a manner witty but too often belittling, and ruthlessly cutting corners in its estimates and summaries behind the camouflage of a high tone and a great deal of genuine knowledge. Fine in the cut and thrust of conversation; but somehow less admirable on paper.

\* \* \*

And so for the remaining non-discontented, interestingly dissimilar.

Kent van den Berg's *Playhouse and Cosmos* seems oddly difficult to put to any use. He is concerned to explore "the ways in which relationships of play and reality inside the [Elizabethan] theater and within [Shakespearean] dramatic fiction define the relationship of the theatrical event as a whole to the world outside", and he does that. But his perfectly sound observations stand on the page like parked cars. Richard A. Levin, we learn, has won a Distinguished Teaching Award, and it is possible that this may have something to do with the over-talkiness of his book, which is concerned with exploring the anti-romantic dimension of Shakespearean comedy, to complement, not to refute, the romantic-theatrical view of these plays. It is necessary as one reads him to bear in mind all the time that, even when he has not explicitly said so, he is arguing with other scholars; forget this, and it can be easy to lose one's sense of direction.

Of James Bulman's *The Heroic Idiom of Shakespearean Tragedy* it seems only necessary to say that it is a very good subject, very well handled. It explores the themes and conventions of the various concepts of the hero available to Shakespeare, and the way he used mixed and probed those concepts. A natural pair with Alan C. Dessen's book, it should illuminate even plays it does not discuss. Not the less one might bet that of this score of volumes it will be Anthony Brennan's *Shakespeare's Dramatic Structures* that in fifteen years' time will be felt to have done most to change the map of Shakespeare studies. A work of art tends to have a twofold structure: static "architectural" form (the legs of English on Pier) and a dynamic form (the wave moving through the legs). From R. B. Moulton to Alastair Fowler and Mark Rose and their contemporaries, with talk of symmetries and diptychs and central turning points, critics have been exploring – off and on – the legs of the pier and their proportions. Brennan is happily coming to grips with the other problem: beginning to decode the technique behind Shakespearean dynamic structure. His deceptively simple-looking book should be read.

## The invention of Australia

Neil Corcoran

A. D. HOPE  
Selected Poems  
130pp. Carcanet. Paperback, £3.95.  
0856356409  
LES A. MURRAY  
Selected Poems  
131pp. Carcanet. Paperback, £3.95.  
0856356670

The reserved, dignified initials and the demotic diminutives themselves tell part of the story: to read A. D. Hope and Les A. Murray, poets of different Australian generations, in tandem is to be aware of the contrasting forms which the reaction to a colonial heritage may take. Hope is imperious, disdainful, prejudiced, autocratic, satiric and erotic. His mythologies are the traditional European classical and biblical ones. He never wavers in his allegiance to the conventional metres and verse forms of English poetry: Yeats, Byron, Pope, Donne and Marlowe are clearly, sometimes explicitly, exemplars, and he is as scathing as Yeats was about free verse, that "dreary shuffle", as he calls it in an essay. Murray is local and democratic, humanly empathetic, socially and geographically specific, agricultural and industrial. His mythologies are indigenous and provisional, a matter of personal history, family lore (the Scottish legend of "the drinking Murrays"), the pioneer tales and tall tales of the outback: all constitute what he has described, ambitiously, as the attempt to "possess the land imaginatively in very much the Aboriginal way". He writes predominantly in large, open, exploratory forms and sequences, combatively uncluttered by allusions to "English poetry": "a major in English made one a minor Englishman", he says of an Australian university education in one poem; and elsewhere, "I don't think Nature speaks English".

Hope's great effort is to yoke himself – by as much violence as it takes – to "literature"; Murray's, to divorce himself. Their respective responses to the parent poetry and the originating civilization could be compared to those of Derek Walcott and Edward Kamau Brathwaite in another post-colonial context. Hope's obedience, however, is always self-scrutinizing and fully aware of its oblique, "outsider" status. In the early, well-known and controversial "Australia", the country is savagely rebuked as an "Arabian desert of the human mind", but Hope nevertheless expects to discover there "some spirit which escapes / The learned doubt, the chatter of cultured apes / Which is called civilization over there". And the splendidly handled fiction of "Man Friday" may be regarded, I suppose, as Hope's guilty myth of the European treatment of the Aborigine: Friday, returned to England with Crusoe, must "labour to invent his nakedness" on this new "Cannibal Island" which "ate his past away". In a plangently mysterious conclusion, Friday strips himself naked and drowns himself, suffering extremes of deprivation, homesickness and loss. (The poem makes an interesting companion-piece for Elizabeth Bishop's "Crusoe in England".)

Nevertheless, the old civilization and the old literature remain immensely seductive. Perhaps only a poet intent on defining a difficult relationship could allow himself to be so unembarrassed by the powerful ghosts of the literary past that stalk through Hope's work. The willed confidence veers close to pastiche; and in attempting so frequently to rise to his occasion in his always sonorous iambs, Hope sometimes seems merely to be putting on airs (the hyperbolically inflated "Soledades of the Sun and Moon" in the present selection is a notable case in point). And when, in "A Letter from Rome", the relationship between Australia ("those dim regions / Where Dante planted Hell's Back Door") and the old world (Rome as "the fons et origo of Western Man") is debated, Hope's intended Byronic *ottava rima* takes on a prim, schoolmasterly, over-explanatory earnestness. It is, frankly, difficult to credit his encounter with the *numen* at Nemi in the poem: when Hope pours a libation of wine on the sacred lake, the new world seems not so much to be making an enquiry of the old as genuflecting abjectly before its fetishized image. To counterbalance this portentously strained mystical moment, this selection, made by Ruth Morse, could perhaps have given us a

wait in another post-colonial context.

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little more of Hope's successful visionary poetry – the very ambitious "Vivaldi, Bird and Angel", for instance.

What the volume does testify to again is that Hope's greatest theme is the erotic. His imagination works best when it plays, morosely or lubriciously, in the bedroom, and particularly when it is entangled in quasi-Jacobean obsessions about sexuality and death, as it is, for instance, in "X-Ray Photograph":

These bones are calm and beautiful:  
The flesh, like water, strains and clears  
To show the face my future wears  
Drowned at the bottom of its pool.

Then I am full of rage and bliss,  
For in our naked bed I feel  
Mate of your panting mouth as well,  
The deathhead lean toward your kiss;

And I am mad to have you here,  
Now, now, the instant shield of lust.  
Deep in your flesh my flesh to thrust  
Against a more tremendous fear.

That perhaps stays, like a lot of Hope's work, just on the right side of the dangerously belated and derivative (Donne, Webster, Eliot), but it has its genuine *frisson* too, originating in the urgent imperatives of Hope's exuberant sensibility, the old Christian dualism heightened to a virtually Manichean degree. Although Hope has his glancing, momentary tenderesses and levities, and his intimations of transcendence ("Time has an end whose end is not in time"), the almost despairingly violent energy of this seems to me his truest note. Indeed, his poems often convey, alarmingly, an energy of anger or vituperation or boredom or lust being held in check, with difficulty, by elaborate formal artifice.

Like Wallace Stevens, Hope began publishing late in his life – at the age of forty-eight, in 1955; and this is probably the main reason for the lack of the usual sense of "development" in this *Selected*. However, the recent nostalgic evocations of his Tasmanian childhood are a surprise and a delight, and such a poem as "Hay Fever" has a new mellowness of tone, as it reads an old man's allegory from its pastoral:

dark than light" leads her to imagine herself  
"no more . . . than raindrops / glimmering in  
last light / on black ash buds / or night beasts in  
a winter field". "Thin as a swan's bone", she  
waits "for lessons of pain and light" welcoming  
"the good dark of this room".

Peter Levi has written that Frances Horowitz's work approaches greatness. A rider needs to be added that it often does so from some way off. Nevertheless the compression, delicacy and seriousness of her best poems reveal a lyrical concentration that is rare in recent poetry. The last poem she wrote, "Orcop Haiku" –

Garway Hill through rain  
– my September window pane  
glass beads hung on glass  
– shows the luminous intensity she had begun to be capable of.

in his hands the dead walk timeless in the wind-  
ridden grass  
he has scattered their door-stones with flowers  
and pried out the mouse bones from the ancient  
hearth

his veins are consumed with light  
they flare out to the sun  
as he runs over the straight roads to the space of the  
sea

through his mother's green ring he calls home the  
tide

he has answered the stones

Ancient religious sites and archaeological relics provide starting-points for several of Horowitz's poems – "stones and the sieved dust" or "syllables snatched by wind" offering a focus for the continuing dialogue between evidence of decay and a persistent spirit of delight. In "Quarterness, Orkney 3500 BC", "wind-scoured bones / heaped hugger-mugger in the corbelled dark" of a charnel-house are contrasted with young lovers who "lie breast to breast / seeding the brief sun into their flesh".

The awareness of mortality which runs through Horowitz's poetry give an added poignancy to her later poems, where death seems "inevitable, unstrange". "Letter to my son" and "For Adam, nearly twelve" are poems of such raw and necessary directness that the reader feels almost an intruder on a private grief. In "Flowers", "Rain-Birds-wald" and "Evening", patterns of light and dark become emblematic of a struggle which was both spiritual and physical. A storm "more

## Lessons of pain and light

Tim Dooley

FRANCES HOROVITZ  
Collected Poems  
128pp. Newcastle upon Tyne: Bloodaxe.  
£12.95 (paperback, £4.95).  
0905289498

Frances Horowitz, who died in 1983, aged forty-five, inspired widespread affection and admiration first as a gifted broadcaster and performer of poetry and later for the quiet, slowly ripening achievement of her own writing. Her *Collected Poems*, edited by Roger Garfit, reprints almost all her published work and adds uncollected poems from throughout her career, and the poems and fragments she composed in the final year of her life.

The first section of her *Collected Poems*, "The High Tower", contains the poems Horowitz produced when she began to write, in the mid-1960s. Formally innocent, sometimes recklessly casual in their organization, they evoke legend and landscape, passion and dream in a rather imprecise way but with an urgency and undefined sense of danger which make them already quite individual. She treats the tensions, exultations and disappointments of sexuality frankly, and is a sharp observer of the natural world; but the special quality of her work at this stage is its presentation of women and men as characters in a timeless drama:

if the city gate my love a hawk hooded  
his eyes dark under the arch

a frail wind carries the brown leaves  
spiral spring up around me  
my white back a beacon to his eyes

With a move to Gloucestershire and the birth of a child in the early 1970s, Frances Horowitz's poetry lost a certain feral quality while developing greater depth and control. Continually through time becomes a central

## Loose Connections

I was either going mad or becoming a schoolmaster when I woke with the question *Distinguish between Fred Karno's Army and Alexander's Ragtime Band* put fiercely to me by a voice that sounded like conscience dreaming

of an exemplary, excessive scruple. Perhaps my addiction to crosswords, wordplay, arcana . . . This afternoon, an ellipsis between one morning and another; I feel the nineteenth-century amplitude

and lassitude of *Brewer's Phrase and Fable*, not that that helped, and as I drift off to sleep I see your kicked-off plimsolls' tongues are lolling like dogs' beached on a dry stretch of the lawn beyond the splash-range of the paddling-pool,

the lawn itself sprouting a white five o'clock shadow of daisies . . . Yet it is young, younger and greener daily, and the daisies are white horses foaming towards an unfamiliar welcoming shore where you stand like Nausikaa

who dressed the stranger, asking him no questions but telling him, rather, that to escape them he should go on towards the palace, wait in the cool of her father's orchard until he reckoned she'd be home and then come on in for supper.

LACHLAN MACKINNON

It is good for a man when he comes to the end of his course  
In the barn of his brain to be able to yank like a boy  
in the heap . . .  
To be still in well-covered hay . . . to drift into sleep.

What is at first impressive in Les A. Murray is the sheer sweep of his descriptiveness: Australia's atmospheres, weathers, agriculture, animals, industry, urban sprawl, large emptinesses and sudden congestions seem to be present almost exhaustively in these poems, elbowing and jostling together with fragments of anecdote, narrative and monologue. The convergences and angularities of the rhapsodic structures are rapid, vertiginous and, sometimes (to a non-Australian, in any case), almost impenetrably opaque: I longed every so often for an explanatory footnote or two. The descriptiveness, however, always serves the purposes of a human plot in which the entire texture of a particular people in a particular place is inferred from geography, agriculture, work and tale. The excellent "Fastness" articulates the process itself:

beyond the exact words, I need  
the gestures with which they were said,  
the horizons and hill air that shaped them,  
the adze-faceted timbers of the kitchen  
where they were repeated to the old people . . .

I will only have history, lacking these,  
not the words in they have to be  
spoken out, in such moments.

Opposing, in its flux and indeterminacy, the static and orthodox configurations of "history", Murray's work presses a series of complex metaphoric meanings from ordinary, perhaps debased terms: "action"; "interest"; "equanimity"; "sprawl"; and, above all, "justice".

This conceptual resourcefulness ensures that description and evocation in Murray are always elements of a morality, signalling Australia as a constantly made, invented world: "The Georgic furrow lengthens", he says, "in ever more intimate country". Witnessing this intimacy, proper names and place-names sigh as casually everywhere in his work as they do in Seamus Heaney, and the poems are immensely rich in their ability to convey a country felt, as it were, along the arteries. What vitiates some of them is the tendency to a certain cracker-barrel epigrammaticism ("the horror of time is, people don't snap out of it", for instance, and "good friends are blood relations that you choose") and too jokey a penchant for baffling titles. He also perhaps describes a deficiency in his own work when he celebrates as "equanimity" an "attention" in which "nothing is diminished by perspective": things are increased, as well as diminished, by perspective. But these are minor reservations about a poetry which has great integrity and verve: it is good to have it made easily available in Britain.

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## Agreeable occupation

Derek Beales

ALVISE ZORZI  
Venezia Austriaca 1798-1866  
413pp. Rome: Laterza. L32,000.  
88 42026506

In the eighteenth century Venice already owed much of its prosperity to its past, which attracted a stream of tourists who were regaled with every possible distraction. Today the city has been reduced, as Alvise Zorzi puts it, to a state of *turistizzazione totale*: in the nineteenth century this stage had not yet been reached, but it was then that, first among non-classical cities, its stones began to be worshipped and their preservation demanded. Signor Zorzi, one of the leaders of the contemporary movement to save Venice, naturally salutes the efforts made after 1814 by the Austrian emperors personally and by their ministers, with the aid of Canova, to recover and reinstate, so far as possible, the art-treasures looted and damaged during the French occupation. They restored the horses to St Mark's and the shattered lion to the top of the column in the Piazzetta. Some destruction continued, especially as noble families abandoned their *palazzi*; but losses, such as the removal of the iconostasis of St Mark's for the sake of liturgical uniformity, were prevented.

The Austrians first occupied Venice from 1798 to 1806. Their return in 1814, after the depredations of Napoleonic rule and the hardships of the final siege, was enthusiastically welcomed. But the early years of the Restoration brought further economic troubles. The Austrian penal code was harsh, prescribing flogging for numerous offences. The secret police was usually controlled by foreigners, and the government was obsessed by the fear of revolutionary conspiracies. Censorship was strict: no one might read Machiavelli, much contemporary French writing was banned and *William Tell* was prohibited because it showed the Habsburgs in a poor light. Censorship was imposed and was bitterly resented. However, the régime was admitted to be fair and efficient, much to be preferred to those of other Italian states. In the 1830s the decay of the city's economy was reversed, partly because of the government's road-building programme and the grant of free-port status. At this stage political discontent was not obtrusive. It was only the revolution of 1848 and its defeat in another harrowing siege the following year that alienated Venetians from their masters.

After this "parenthesis" came a spell of martial law and the benevolent vicereignty of the archduke Maximilian (1854-9). But the Venetians envied the annexation of their sister-province, Lombardy, by Piedmont-Sardinia in 1859. In 1866 Francis Joseph, defeated by Prussia, handed over Venice and the Veneto to Napoleon III, to be passed on to the new kingdom of Italy. The Austrians felt relief as well as regret – and contempt at the failures of Italian arms. King Victor Emmanuel duly received a warm welcome from the Venetians, but they also waved their handkerchiefs amicably at the departing Austrian garrison.

Signor Zorzi, after five chronological chapters, supplies nine on various aspects such as the administration, classes, police, religion and festivities. He has stepped himself in the surviving documents of the period, especially diaries, and his account has the authenticity that comes with the frequent quotation of the words of contemporaries. Many of his characters come to life, like the patriarch Pycker and the bizarre police commissar Pullé, wearing down his victims with his literary pretensions. Zorzi catches the absurdities of the rigid and pompous Habsburg régime while revealing its advantages, especially as compared with the rule of Napoleon. But, he concludes, the modern "myth of an impeccable, provident Austria, severe but just", a myth born of dissatisfaction with united Italy, is as visceral as that of "wicked" Austria. . . . The perfect state has never existed, though some have undoubtedly existed that have been admirable in certain ways, even if in other respects insignificant.



One of a series of silver gelatin prints of Jeanne Bosc and the painter Jean-Louis Forain in a gondola, photographed by Giuseppe Primoli on August 23, 1889. The print is reproduced from Paolo Costantini and Italo Zannier's *Venezia nella fotografia dell'Ottocento* (150pp. Venice: Arsenale).

## Noble consensus

B. S. Pullan

MARGARET L. KING  
Venetian Humanism in an Age of Patrician Dominance  
524pp. Guildford: Princeton University Press.  
£43.35.  
0691 054657

Since the Renaissance, attitudes to the state and society of Venice have been strongly influenced by the myth and the anti-myth of the city. The myth portrayed it as a uniquely wise and harmonious polity, which had somehow achieved immunity from faction and revolution and so escaped seigneurial rule and foreign conquest, retaining its liberty in the face of fearful odds. Devotees of the anti-myth, from Pope Pius II to the Spanish ambassador Bedmar, saw the rulers of Venice as a tyrannical oligarchy, not real nobles but fishermen's brats turned traders, amoral as the cold-blooded creatures of their own lagoons, indifferent to higher ideals and crusading fervour, loving not Jesus but the Peloponnesus. Historians of Venice are still inclined to rally to one flag or the other. Exasperated by the still powerful attractions of the myth, certain scholars, from Cracco di Padua to Queller of Illinois, have gleefully sought out evidence of totalitarian tendencies and irresponsible conduct, latent within Venice's "reprehensibly perfect" ruling class.

Margaret L. King, studying fifteenth-century Venetian Latinists and Grecians with rare thoroughness, is very much an exponent of the myth and its evolution – though she does take precautions against confusing it with the reality. Presenting humanism to readers who may not themselves be classical scholars is a hazardous undertaking; it is hard to explain the excitement which gripped its practitioners. All too easily, humanists can be depicted as derivative thinkers, pompous moralizers, mutual admirers, even sycophants whining for patronage and much given to extravagant panegyric or savage invective. Considered in purely intellectual terms, Venetian humanism, with its impeccably high-minded sentiments and conventional piety, has all the liveliness of an eighteenth-century memorial tablet in an English parish church. But, with great skill, Professor King manages to draw out the significance of its unenterprising character, to be honest about its limitations, and to reveal if for what it became – part of the ideology of the

ruling class in an unusually stratified and rigid society, where not only the patriciate but also the secondary élites of citizens and secretaries were precisely defined by law.

Venetian humanists were often amateurs rather than professional practitioners of the discipline, noblemen who resorted to study in the leisure moments of an exacting political career. About 70 per cent of the important humanists painstakingly identified in this book were of noble birth. Humanism was a refuge from "the psychic strain the noble class imposed as a discipline upon itself as a price of power; the strain of seeming faceless, passionless, selfless". Thus King, One wonders mildly, though, how much of a relief it can have provided, when so much of it was directed towards reinforcing official values – to defending hereditary nobility and privilege, marriage within one's class, the ruthless subordination of the individual will to the pursuit of the common good. Here is further proof, if any now be needed, that the Renaissance cannot as a whole be understood in terms of the development of individual self-awareness, personality and judgment, or be held to have presented any serious challenge to Christian values. King firmly identifies the central ideal of Venetian humanist culture as "Unanimity – the convergence of a multitude of wants and aspirations into a single will". The most prominent rebel against this consensus was Ermolao Barbaro the Younger, advocate of celibacy and abstract contemplation, who died sadly in disgrace in Rome in the 1490s.

King has constructed a prosopography of all her leading humanists, and this – occupying a quarter of the work – will interest anyone seeking to identify patterns in the careers of Venetian noblemen and chancery officials. There is no surviving survey of Venetian wealth to match the Florentine tax records, which were used by Lauro Martines in his *Social World of the Florentine Humanists*; inevitably, the economic information in King is vaguer than the precise material about the holding of office. Florentine historians, including Christiane Klapisch-Zuber, have proved conspicuously successful in combining literary with iconographic and demographic evidence to create an imaginative account of Quattrocento society. Venetian scholars are trailing some way behind them. But books such as Professor King's, sensitively written, lucid and well planned, relating literature to the social orders which produced it, mark important steps towards an equally comprehensive view of the most stable of Renaissance states.

## A reconciling doctrine

Alastair Hamilton

BARRY COLLETT  
Italian Benedictine Scholars and the Reformation: The Congregation of Santa Giustina of Padua  
287pp. Oxford: Clarendon Press. £25.  
0 19 82 293 4 8

The Italian Benedictines took a course remarkable by the standards of late medieval monasticism. Far from participating in the general decline of the monastic orders in the fifteenth century, the Benedictine monasteries of Italy from 1420 started to unite in the Congregation of Santa Giustina of Padua, and for almost a century continued to gain members, conventual buildings and prestige, accumulating riches and assembling libraries. The monks of Santa Giustina also devised a highly individual doctrine. Their theology was based mainly on study of the great Greek Father, John Chrysostom, to which they were stimulated by some of the foremost Greek scholars of the time. This offered an alternative to the more traditional pattern of ascent salvation, whereby perfection could ultimately be reached, and satisfaction last be paid for original sin, by dint of personal piety and the assiduous performance of good works – in co-operation with divine grace. The monks of Santa Giustina, on the other hand, regarded sin as a state of illness, rather than of guilt, and salvation not as a process of atonement but as a restoration to health. For the recovery offered by Christ to be achieved, grace and living faith were required, which were necessarily associated with the performance of good works and with free will.

Having skirted the problem of faith and works as it was put by Luther, the monks believed, at the time of the Reformation, that their teaching could provide a solution acceptable to both Catholics and Protestants. Yet it was the Reformation, and still more the Council of Trent, that led to the suffocation of the Benedictine tradition. Certain former members of the Congregation were convicted as Protestants – the most tragic case was that of Giorgio Siculo, who, whatever he was, was no Protestant, but was hanged as one in Ferrara in 1551 – and the Congregation was exposed to suspicion by the apparent proximity of its doctrine to Lutheran justification by faith alone. After Trent the monks began to adopt the type of affective piety there sanctioned, and thus abandoned one of the more original theological shifts of the Renaissance.

Among the many eminent theologians of the Congregation were Isidoro Chiari, Gregorio Bornato, Luciano degli Ottomi and Teodoro Folengo (who is also famous for his macaronic poetry). Santa Giustina was connected, moreover, with a particularly intriguing episode – the anonymous publication in 1510 of the tract known as the *Beneficio di Cristo*. Within six years of its appearance 40,000 copies are estimated to have been sold, but in 1549 it was placed on the Index and from then on it became, in the eyes of the Inquisition, a highly incriminating work, a sure indication of heresy in that it was said to contain the teachings of Luther, Bucer, Melancthon and Calvin. It later emerged that the work had been written by the Benedictine Benedictus da Mantova and then revised by Marcantonio Flaminio, notorious for his Protestant leanings.

In the long chapter of *Italian Benedictine Scholars and the Reformation* that Barry Collett devotes to the *Beneficio di Cristo* he deals with the many conflicting theories of modern scholars about the book's sources, and argues that the part which can be attributed to Benedictus da Mantova is manifestly in the tradition of the order and little more than a statement of the theology derived from Chrysostom.

Were it not for the many misprints and errors in the Latin and the Italian, Collett's book would be a work of admirable scholarship. He writes with sensitivity and empathy about a theological debate which became increasingly complex under the impact of the Reformation. He challenges a number of current hypotheses and illuminates clearly a relatively unstudied tradition which can account for many developments in sixteenth-century Italy.

## Prophet of the unbecome

Michael Tanner

ERNST BLOCH  
The Principle of Hope  
Translated by Neville Plaice, Stephen Plaice and Paul Knight  
1,428pp. Oxford: Blackwell. £120.  
0631 133879

*Das Prinzip Hoffnung* received the front-page treatment in the *TLS* on March 31, 1961 – or at least the first two volumes, published by Suhrkamp, did. They cost the equivalent of £5 at the then exchange-rate – approximately eleven marks to the pound as opposed to 3.1 now. Here are the three volumes (the third was originally published in East Germany) at twenty-four times that price. Not much cause for hope there. Even so, the enterprise of translation and publication in English automatically calls for the adjective "heroic". The translators provide a brief, encouraging introduction, including a rapid biography of Bloch, which contains the delightful piece of information that he was repeatedly denied US citizenship in the late 1930s and early 1940s on the grounds that he had been a "premature anti-Fascist", that is, before Pearl Harbor. (A considerably more detailed introduction to his work and his relation to contemporary European thought is provided by David Drew in his characteristically searching introduction to Bloch's *Essay on the Philosophy of Music*, reviewed in the *TLS*, October 4, 1985).

In the course of the 1961 review, the anonymous writer remarked, "The historian of the future may well see this noble and massive work . . . standing outside the 1960s like the massive portal outside Euston station: symbolically, though not functionally, anticipating our departures" – a most unfortunate comparison, considering the fate of that fine functionless portal. The reviewer continued enthusiastically, if a little vaguely, but it is hard to know what to do about Bloch's *maximum opus*. It defines categories so comprehensively that one flounders, searching for some appropriate criteria by which to assess or even to understand it, only to be rebuffed time and again.

It is an injunction, as the title implies, to realize that we haven't yet fulfilled our potential, to grasp and act on the fact that there is far more to being human than we have yet dared to allow ourselves to believe, and in that respect it is aligned with the great prophetic-hortatory works of religion, literature, philosophy – Nietzsche, obviously, above all – and political speculation. Indeed, it can be seen in all those lights, and the extraordinary cast of heroes and villains that Bloch employs suggests a synthesis of wisdom armed against every conceivable intellectual and spiritual vice and folly. The question arises, as always in ambitious syntheses, of the nature and quality of the material which holds the heterogeneous elements of the

system together. It is extraordinarily difficult in Bloch's case to provide an answer, certainly one that can adequately withstand the charge that he is a quirkily erudite, exuberant rhetorician and nothing more. Linguistically, as the translators note, "he blends archaisms, Latin and Greek terms [there is a thirteen-page glossary of foreign terms – foreign to German and English – at the end], obsolescent usages, 'Volksweisheiten' (popular sayings and proverbs) with the language of Marxism, science and dialectical materialism to produce a kind of cultural lexicon of the German language". He also makes free with the terminology of eschatology, technical terms from many philosophical systems, and especially with hyphenated post-Heideggerian coinages. Above all, Bloch is impressed by music as the phenomenon which perpetually bodies forth his salient concept of the Not-Yet and which, with its various non-logical principles of large-scale organization, offers him that transcendence of linear thinking that lends the reader, according to his temperament, to speak of "metaphoric logic" (George Steiner) or of excited confusion.

The translators have caught the tone – however one characterizes it – with remarkable fidelity. They are up to Bloch's most prolonged exaltations as well as his pseudo-analytical turgidities, his sudden passages of clear-eyed observation and his vehement condemnations. Of all his tones, I find Bloch's deadpan accounts of petty daily frustrations perhaps the most attractive, though it is noticeable that when he is critically retailing commonplace wishful thinking he is happy to use Marxist terminology and concepts; thus when he writes

A woman stands in front of the shop-window, looking at lizard-skin shoes trimmed with chamois leather, a man goes past, looks at the woman, and so both of them have a share of the wishful land. There is enough happiness in the world, only it is not for me; the wish tells itself this, wherever it goes . . .

it turns out to be "the bourgeois" of whom he is thinking. But Marxism is inadequate to serve his positive purposes, his attempts to delineate the content of that spirit of Utopia which was the subject of his first vast book. There is throughout his writing an agreeably anarchic flavour, so that it is not surprising that, in extreme old age, he was fêted by the revolutionaries of 1968 – in Silvia Markun's excellent biography (1977) there is a marvelous photograph of Bloch lying on the beach in Denmark with Rudi Dutschke and a naked infant.

None the less, and for all its charming, informative, mischievous, high-spirited, tender, even spellbinding properties, *The Principle of Hope* is desperately unreadable. It is mostly written in that timeless present-tense which gives a pervasive sense of urgency to what is conceptually incoherent, poetically banal and finally irresponsible. The issues with which it deals are ones for which is required, in the first

place, a clear head, and too often Bloch equates a clear head with an empty one, and correlatively a cloudy head with one full of deep thoughts. Here is an entirely characteristic passage from the book's home-stretch – and I realize that Bloch's admirers will think it unfair to excerpt him in this way; my reply would be that since he continues like this the impression it makes may well be more favourable than that left by reading him from now until the millennium:

Precisely the best does after all lie nearby, where one does not expect to find it. The Here and Now therefore returns at this highest place, has to say its Being-For-Itself. All intensive-utopian glances, with their moral, musical, religious guidelines, lead back to the darkness of the lived moment: for there the fermenting All sprouts, and there it is still hidden from itself, unbecome in utopian terms. Every single narrow path around the hope-content of a Being-For-Itself goes up to the moment, with an ever more intensive attempt to define the fundamentally intensive element.

It isn't that there is no meaning in this, but that what meaning one can unpack is disconcertingly trite. It all reminds me of Carnap's once-famous remark that "Metaphysicians are musicians without musical ability". Loving music, and above all *Fidelio*, as much as he did, Bloch should have trusted it, that is, should have left it to affect us without attempting a prose-style which he hoped would have a similar impact, but with the added strength of discursive argument. It is impossible to have both, and in attempting to give us, not the metaphysics of music (a vitally important and virtually uncharted territory) but the metaphysics in music, Bloch leaves me feeling like a tone-deaf person must after a performance of the Ninth Symphony. Perhaps I am Bloch-deaf. For those who aren't, this enormous book may well provide the experience of a lifetime – as, at this price, it certainly should.

## Notes from a wailing wall

Idris Parry

ELIAS CANETTI  
The Human Province  
Translated by Joachim Neugroschl  
281pp. Deutsch. £9.95.  
0233 978372

This fluent translation of *Die Provinz des Menschen* (*TLS*, January 25, 1974) should not be peddled as "the most autobiographical" of Canetti's works. That was reasonably accurate on first publication in 1973, but since then we've had the author's own three volumes about his life. What we have here is a collection of notes made between 1942 and 1972 as a daily task, an exercise in spontaneity. The writer tells us he never read them again or changed them in any way. He is communicating with himself, with no intention that his thoughts should be overheard or analysed. This makes for obscurity.

We are required to make an effort to understand jottings which were, for Canetti, efforts to understand. There is a revealing note about his visit to Morocco when he felt that English and French people, whose languages he spoke, were alien to him. "The others, however, the people who have always lived there and whom I didn't understand – they were like myself to me." This is the author who, born to speak Spanish, educated to write German, exiled as a Jew to England, has spent most of his working life in a protected oasis of language, kept pure by isolation.

Canetti says he can't keep silent. "But many people are silent within me, people I do not know. Their outbursts sometimes make me a poet." In this book we have many outbursts like "Trout hunting swallows" which are obvious self-reminders. They can't be explained, any more than a poem can be explained. Other entries can be related more easily to the mind that produced *Crowds and Power* and *Auto da Fé*, so that much light is thrown on these books. He sums up his position like this: "There is a wailing wall of humanity, and that is where I stand."

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